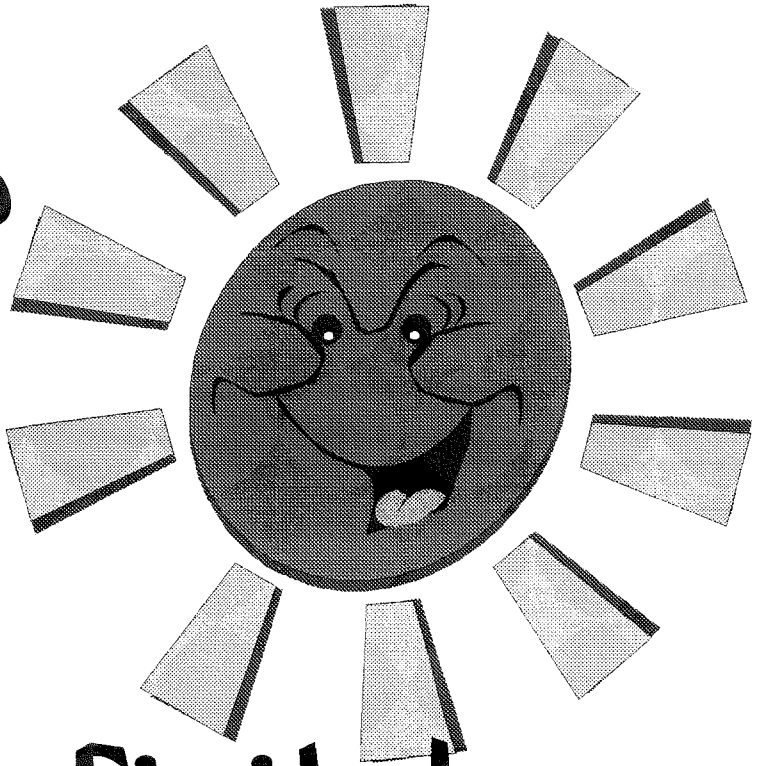
QL Today

Volume 6
Issue 2
July/August
2001

ISSN 1432-5454

The Magazine about QL, QDOS, Sinclair Computers, SMSQ...

A hot Summer?



We'll see!

... but definitely a

Hot Issue!

Find out - don't get burned!

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QL Today

ISSN 1432-5454

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QL Today is published bi-monthly, our volume begins on beginning of June. Subscriptions begin with the current issue at the time of sign up. Please contact the German or English office for current subscription rates.

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Article and Advertising deadlines are as follows:

Issue 1: 30 April	Issue 2: 30 June
Issue 3: 30 August	Issue 4: 30 October
Issue 5: 30 December	Issue 6: 28 February

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Editorial

Dilwyn Jones

Well, we asked for your views on the Q40/Q60 versus emulators debate and we certainly got a lot of response. On the whole, it was a pretty balanced response, some on the side of the Graf brothers, others preferring the 'emulator' paths, others taking a more balanced view. The consensus of opinion by and large seemed to be that QLers could and should take the path best suited to their needs.

We are printing many of the responses received in this issue, then we'll give the Graf brothers the final say in the next issue and close the correspondence on this subject.

Sorry for having been late last time for European readers. Once a year the US guys get it delivered early and everybody else has to wait! The timing of the American show does tend to interrupt the publishing schedule a little (since Jochen will insist on going over there on holiday!) He seems to have managed to bring three separate Canadian show reviews back with him, but I guess we can justify this on the grounds that perhaps we do not do the QL scene in North America much justice normally.

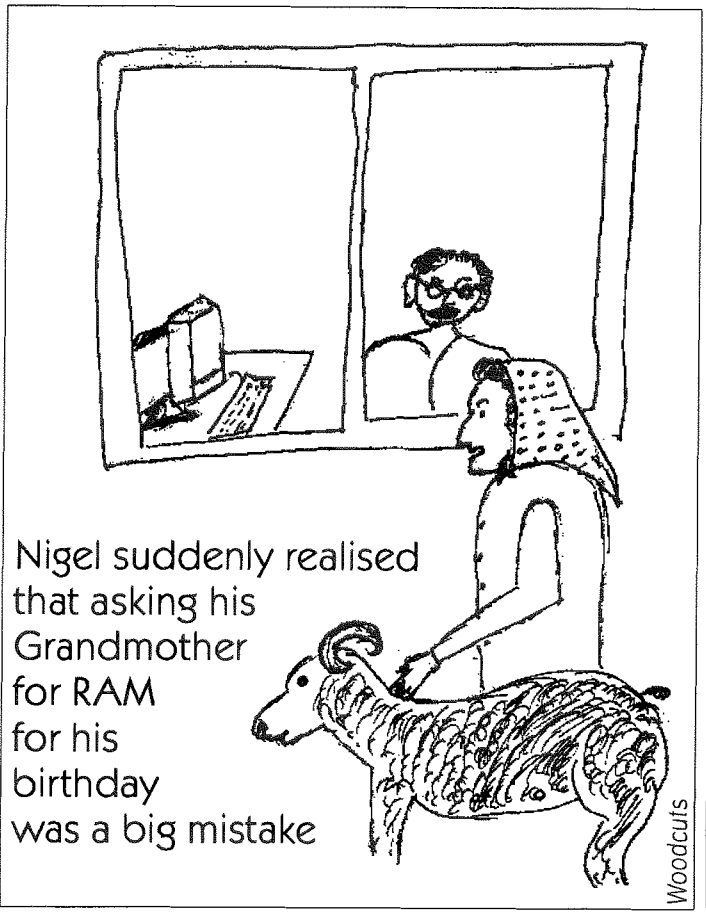
Recently, my system got updated to have SMSQ/E v2.99 on it. Oh, oh, has Tony Tebby finally run out of version numbers or is he now contemplating a release 3.00 of SMSQ/E? Only he (and possibly Jochen Merz) could know the answer to that and neither is telling me. Wouldn't surprise me if they pulled a rabbit out of the hat and (wait for it) started using letters instead of numbers - version 2.9A or V2a99 or whatever. Just in case there was to be an SMSQ/E v3.00, what do you think should be added to it? Time for some internet support at O/S level perhaps - facilities for TCP/IP etc built into SMSQ/E or as an O/S module perhaps?

Thierry Godefroy has pulled another rabbit out of a hat with his new CD-ROM thing. Users of Qubide can now access CD-ROMs with a suitable CD drive attached to a suitable Qubide version (see news pages). Thierry has released an alpha version of this software via his website, although his work means he spends long periods at a time at sea, so the short term may not bring very extensive development of the current version.

At the time of writing, this issue looks like being slightly thinner than usual, but we hope to make up for this with another cover disk soon. Now will I be selfish and fill it up with Dilwyn Jones programs, or do you have any better suggestions for content?

Enjoy the summer sunshine and keep QLing!

Cartoon



NEWS

News from Thierry Godefroy

I have just put the beta (v0.20) of my ATAPI thing and the alpha (v0.06) of my CDROM device driver/thing onto my web site.
BEWARE: this still must be considered as unstable software!
The good news is that it works for both Q40/Q60 and QUBIDE systems (only under SMSQ/E and with (Super)Gold Card for QUBIDE though).
It is also possible to get access to a QLWA disk image (QXL.WIN file) burnt directly on a CD-R.
It may be downloaded from my website on
http://qdos.cjb.net/english/download.html

New Software from your friendly Editor

Your editor has been busy in recent weeks completing several new QL programs he has been working on for some time. They are all available for download from:
http://www.soft.net.uk/dj/software/freeware/freeware.html

QH (QDOS Header) System

New on the freeware software page on my website is a system called QH (QDOS Headers) which is meant for people like me wanting to store files on non-QDOS media. Many of us have bad experiences of losing executable QL program dataspaces and headers when programs saved on DOS or other 'native' format media have lost their executable file headers. QH consists of just two short BASIC programs which will store and restore the dataspace in a separate short file.
This package was developed for use with the CD-ROMs I developed for Q-Celt Computing. I put the 'main' copy of programs in a QXL.WIN container for systems like QPC, QemuLator 2, uQLx, QXL, Q40/60 and others able to read QXL.WINs. I also add zipped archive files of these programs outside the QXL.WIN for users of systems able to read CD-ROM media via the host computer and transfer the zipped files onto QDOS floppy disks or other media, then unzip them on a QL.
QH provides another method. You cannot use programs directly from a non-QDOS medium, but at least you can copy them to a QL, run a short BASIC program to restore the executable file header and execute them from there.
The program which creates the _qh file in the first place can if required process every single executable file on a medium, creating a matching _qh file for each executable program. I hope this little QH utility will prove popular with anyone wishing to distribute QL software on CDs without being restricted to just the QXL.WIN systems.

UNZIP Librarian

A front end program for unzipping zipped files. There are two versions, one pointer driven and the other not pointer driven. Both need Toolkit 2, and a copy of QL Unzip of course (may be obtained from **www.daria.co.uk** Jonathan Hudson's website)
Unzip Librarian lets you browse drives and directories looking for zip files to unzip. Just click on the zip file and it will unzip it for you. You have to configure it (or enter the settings) to tell it where to unzip to, and where it can find your copy of Unzip.
Unzip Librarian is only a front end for unzip (i.e. it does not zip up files) and has no file selection from within the zipped files, so this is clearly not a competitor to Archivers Control Panel, merely a quick and simple way to unzip files.
The programs are freeware and may, for example, be freely used to distribute QL software in zipped format, for example, via websites, BBSes and PD library disks.

Conversions

Conversions is a Metric/Imperial units conversion program. Type in the number of inches, it'll tell you the equivalent in millimetres or vice versa. Type in the temperature in degrees Celsius, it will tell you the equivalent in Fahrenheit units.
This program was developed from an earlier program I wrote for doing temperature unit conversions - that program is also available from my website. Both programs are pointer driven and require Toolkit 2.

SystemSet

SystemSet is a system settings utility, with three main purposes. First, it helps you check and alter QL system clock settings, avoiding the need for SDATE commands from S*BASIC. Secondly, it helps you set PAR_USE, RAM_USE, DEV_USE, FLP_USE, SER_USE, WIN_USE and so on. Thirdly, the Files section helps you create directories and

also provides a simple to use pointer driven file selection menu which when used in conjunction with the Stuffer Buffer, gives an easy method of pointer driven file selection even in non-pointer driven programs. Just select the file you want, left click (HIT) on it and the filename is now in the stuffer buffer. From the other program, use ALT-SPACE to insert the filename when the program asks you to enter a filename.
The programs are freeware and will be added to the latest release of the QL Emulators CD (which includes hundreds of freeware programs) plus the DJ Bargain Software Bundle CD-ROM from Q-Celt Computing as soon as we are confident the programs are reasonably free of bugs.

Compact Flash for Q40/Q60?

Q40 hardware designer Peter Graf has been experimenting with using compactflash memory adaptors via an IDE interface to his Q40 and Q60. Although he says it's early days and he does not really have the time to pursue this as much as he'd like, Peter indicated on the QL Users Email Mailing List that initial results were promising. CompactFlash is a kind of flash memory system, as used on some digital cameras. QLers will also be familiar with a similar technology from TF Services, called RomDisq. In essence it allows you to have solid state hard disks based on memory technology which does not lose its content when switched off. Flash memory can be slower than modern hard disks, and usually lower capacity, but has the advantages that there are no moving parts, no noise in operation and is very reliable.

QL Web Sites List

Tony Firshman writes:
This gives a good list of QL related sites:
http://directory.google.com/Top/Computers/Systems/Sinclair/QL/

[Editor's note: Can't have been that good a list, as it didn't list my website! It does, however, list the Quantum Ring list of QL-related websites which currently consists of over a dozen QL web sites including my own. However, I tried to make up for the omission by using its facility to send them an email with details of sites to be added, although at the time of writing it hadn't been added. I hope all QL website owners will also bombard them with emails to ensure that as many QL sites get recognition as possible (spread the QL gospel...]

Norfolk QL User Group

Tarquin Mills writes:
ACCUS is a local Norfolk QL user group.
Membership is free and I have just been offered some free monitors. We have meetings at the Billy Bluelight Pub (Hall Road, Norwich, the Queens Road end) backroom. Join our mailing list for dates of future meetings, see our website for details
www.planet14.sonow.com/comp/accus/
We can supply local help and hardware.

JMS News

If anybody still has my old email address at t-online.de: please delete it! I have moved everything from this provider for several months and I pop this account maybe twice a week - and sooner or later will stop using it at all.
Please use **smsq@j-m-s.com** or **JMerz@j-m-s.de** or **JMerz@j-m-s.com**
I managed to get alternative ink cartridges for the new EPSON Stylus Color models.
Black ink for the 480 and 580 costs DM 26,90. Black ink for the 680 is still pretty expensive, DM 38,90 (still cheaper than the original). Black ink for the 880 costs only DM 26,90. Colour for the 480, 580 and 880 DM 32,90. As for the other inks, minimum order is three cartridges.

QL News List Changes

from Jochen Merz
QL News list was hosted on Listbot.
The listbot owner informed all users that listbot will be shut down soon. They offer a better (paid) list handling service.
Instead of moving to another list handling service which may shut down sooner or later too and bring up the same problem, I decided I would use the list features provided by my j-m-s.com provider.
It is not as advanced as listbot, but it is without their advertising. In addition, I have control over it - i.e. I can take care about repeated "out of office" messages etc.
I have manually moved all current subscribers to the new list, which is located at **QLNews@j-m-s.com**.
Subscription to this list is not automatic, to prevent abuse. But you can unsubscribe in the usual way, if you want to. I have removed nearly all access from "outside" so that spammers cannot get and abuse your email accounts.
The change was done about a month ago - it works very well!

QPC2v2 Updates

from Marcel Kilgus

QPC v2.03 together with SMSQ/E v2.99 is now available from the usual places. Existing users can obtain upgrades from the Jochen Merz BBS and websites by downloading the files, which will require a password obtainable from Jochen Merz before they can be used.

Issues addressed:

- Severe 16bit sprite cache bug in SMSQ/E v2b98
- 0x0 sized windows now possible in 16bit mode
- SER_USE and PAR_USE fixed

General Election Program

from Geoff Wicks

The 2001 edition of my General Election analysis program is now available.

There several new features in this version. These include 8 new maps, additional information on marginal seats and a by-election command. This command allows you to enter the result of a by-election and predict the effect of the by-election swings nationally.

The program can be downloaded from:

http://members.tripod.co.uk/geoffwicks/election.htm

It can also be obtained directly from me or the QUANTA library. If you order from me please send 4 first class stamps to cover post and disk costs. **Geoff Wicks, 28 Ravensdale, Basildon, Essex SS16 5HU**

geoffwicks@hotmail.com

Legal Clarification

Geoff Wicks

In his report of the Portishead show Dilwyn Jones wrote that I "had produced an Advanced Cryptics Dictionary" for SOLVIT-PLUS. This dictionary is, in fact, a freeware word list from the internet that I have converted to SOLVIT-PLUS format. As is indicated in my advertisements the word list is copyright 1993 - 2000 J Ross Beresford.

RWAP Software News

from Rich Mellor

Genealogy for Windows

Keep up to date with the latest version (v5.21) for only £7.50 (send original CD as proof of purchase)

Users of QL Genealogist can now upgrade to the Windows version for £25 (send original QL disk/mdv as proof of purchase)

Q-Route

Don't forget to upgrade to v2.00 - cost £5. Return your original disk.

The full version remains available for new users at £25.

Most of the maps have now been upgraded - send your disk back with the maps and £1 per map to get the latest versions.

GWASL v1.7

from George Gwilt

Followers of Norman Dunbar's Assembler series in QL Today may like to know that version 1.7 of the GWASL assembler program (Gwass Assembler Lite) by George Gwilt is now available for download from the Other Software page on my website.

In fact, the files have been in my possession for some time, but I've only just found time to update the website (sorry Norman and George).

http://www.soft.net.uk/dj/software/other/gwasl17.zip

Q-CELT Computing News

Version 1.14 of the QL Emulators CD is now available either from Q-Celt Computing or direct from Dilwyn Jones. This release is now a stable version with several duff zipped files now fixed and many new programs added to the hundreds of freeware shareware and PD programs already included. The use of _QH files (see separate news items) means that it is easier for people using native file access to retrieve executable QDOS files direct from the CD without having to either extract them from ZIP files or from the QXLWIN files. At the moment, most of the free programs included are still in archived format, with a few programs like Turbo and DIY Toolkit in their own directories with QH files to see if the QH system makes these easier to use.

V1.14 of the CD is still in ISO-9660/Joliet format. It is hoped that the next release will include a Rockridge file system directory as well, to make life easier for Amiga emulator users, for example. We would also like to include a Mac HFS system as well if we can find suitable software (we can afford!) with which we can create these CDs.

Version 1.4 of the DJ Bargain Bundle CD is now available, including several new Dilwyn Jones freeware programs. SystemSet, Metric Conversions, Dictionary (including English-German translation), Today and Unzip Librarian.

Wow! Too many news for three pages! Continued on page 50!

Different Viewpoints

To calm the ongoing QPC-Q40 discussion down, we have asked our readers to submit their viewpoints for this issue. As promised, we then allow a final reply from Claus and Peter Graf and hope that the viewpoints are made clear (if not already).
Although some readers may find the subject boring by now, every letter is interesting and shows a different point of view, or different facts. We are sure you will find it interesting.
Still, QL Today wants to stress that the views expressed in their articles are personal views and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher or the editorial team.

Roy Wood (QBranch) writes:

Oh dear. I seem to have upset Peter Graf with some of my comments and views in recent editions of my column. Although this was not my intention I have no repentance to offer. What I write in Byts of Wood are my views - I leave the dissemination of 'Ultimate Truth' to him. Still here are a few more 'views' in response - I have little doubt that he will start 'spitting feathers again'. I must start by saying that I still do all of the Q Branch work on the Q 40 and I still think it is the best native QL available at the moment but it has little or no competition here since there are only a few secondhand QLs, Auroras and Gold/Super Gold cards around. I wish that the situation was different.
I would also like to state a few things before we get too far.
1. The decision to stop advertising the Q 40 was due to the fact that I have none to sell. Out of a total of 50 boards I have around 10 left which do not work and, for which, Tony Firshman can find no solution. I did not want to stop selling the Q 40. I did want to sell all of the 50 boards that we bought. The suggestion that I should sell QPC2 in preference to the Q40 and, by inference, actually talk people out of buying the Q 40 is absurd. I had bought 50 boards and components and I needed to recoup the loss that that represented. I buy QPC2 as and when it is ordered so there is no loss if no one bought a copy. He seems to think there is a conspiracy against his product ('Paranoid, me - I know who said that about me !').
2. Q Branch has no intention of abandoning its support of the people who currently use the Q 40. We will continue to provide help, advice and software as before.
3. When Tony Firshman and I decided to go ahead with the Q 40 project we had no illusions about making a profit. Quite the reverse. We sat in an Italian restaurant in Germany after a QL show and discussed the whole thing. We both felt that it was an important thing to do and we both thought that we would be lucky to break even on this. We discussed the possibility of add on cards such as ethernet etc. and thought that there might be some profit there, but on the whole we did it because we felt it would keep the QL scene alive. I don't want to present us as the great benefactors here or to claim any special altruism but it is annoying we we get accused of putting profit first - especially when we have made a loss.
4. QPC 2 is the best QL Emulator around and that has plenty of competition, mostly free or shareware. It is a good indication of just how good this software is that so many people have bought it when the competition is free. It is easy to install where most of the free ones do not seem to be and it has the best, most up to date, operating system.
I will ignore the silly semantics about 'platforms'. My computer is a tool not a religion so, if it does what I want, how I want it, then I am happy. I suspect that goes for most users so the whole argument is specious.

OK Peter First

Yes I did say that my Athlon PC ran some things faster than the Q 40 and, I am sorry, it does. I used the same demonstration at Eindhoven a couple of years ago to show how much faster the Q 40 was than a Super Gold Card Aurora. Peter was there then and did not complain it was an unfair test. It is not a simple screen redraw because it is re-calculating the screen and then redrawing it. It was also not a case of 'feeling it was faster'. I had two machines side by side and hit 'ENTER' to initiate the command at the same time. The Q 40 was beaten by the PC by about 7 seconds.
Peter is right when he says I did not have the copyback caching turned on. I have tried running the program by Mark Swift and it does speed up a lot of the processes. There is a caveat here

though because the readme text suggests that 'some programs may need patching to run with this'. There are, as far as I can see, no instructions on how to patch programs to run with it. I have run the machine with the commands in the boot file for a while and noticed few anomalies but statements like this worry me. It took a while to get the boot file sorted out so that I could run the programs that I normally run. If you load the resident file and then initiate the COPYBACK command ProWesS will not run. I found the best way to do it was to load the extensions at the start and then add the command at the very end of the BOOT file.

Benchmarks may tell you how fast a computer will perform certain tasks but never how fast it will run an application because the application will call on different parts of the computer to do different tasks. The sum of those actions adds up to the overall speed as experienced by a user and that was the point. My PC also loads my databases faster under QPC 2 because it has a large ATA 100 hard drive but that was an unfair comparison so I did not mention it. I could have optimised the QPC 2 setup by reducing the RAM to 8Mb which would have made it run much faster but I ran both machines as I normally do with QPC 2 set to 32Mb and all of the programs loaded on both. I had no axe to grind I was just making a comment about the validity of benchmarks - not attacking the Q 40.

QL programs are, on the whole, so small that they load just as fast on any system. The software setup on all of my systems is identical with the same boot file being used by all four of my QL computers. (There are one or two, machine specific, differences but nothing major) Peter may well have some things which run faster on his Q 40 than on the PC but that was not the point either. He stated the Q 40 was faster than the PC overall by quoting benchmarks. Comments about his not being able to use certain processor specific commands are also irrelevant. We have all suffered from the limitations of having to be backwardly compatible with earlier QDOS systems since the Gold Card. It is a fact of life that users want to run older programs on new systems. Miracle. Tony Tebby and Marcel have just had to put up with that and do what the users want. We were not talking about the fantasy Q40 that Peter may have in his head but a real life system that is available to the user.

Ok on to my comments about the design of the Q60. Not being psychic or being in possession of some master spying system I know nothing about the state of the Q 60. I saw an early prototype at an Eindhoven show and that was it. It seems that. judging from Peter's words in the last issue, the Q 60 is now a done deal and that it is a Q 40 board with a 68060 processor on it together with the various changes to the code. If that is so then it is a shame because it could have been better.

The whole point about the use of ISA slots and SIMMS cannot be easily dismissed. Both Tony Firshman and I searched for good I/O cards when the first batch were not available any more we found some but they would have required either a rewrite of SMSQ/E or need programming on a PC before use. Jumpered I/O ISA cards with a full set of serial/parallel,floppy and hard drive ports were not to be found. As time goes by these items will become rarer and more expensive because less people use them.

I work for a company which supplies PC components and I used our database to look for them. I did find a few, very expensive boards by specialist manufacturers but that was all. One of our customers uses specialist ISA COMMS cards and they bought a large batch from their supplier when they said they were going to cease production just so they had spares available. Trouble is they now cannot find motherboards with the three ISA slots they need. Just one example of the pitfalls of obsolescent hardware. You know the story with SIMMS. Expensive and outdated. Can anyone find a 30 pin SIMM higher than 2Mb today at a price that is less than a 64 Mb DIMM ?

And the sound input. Am I missing something here or did someone write a CD ROM driver for SMSQ/E and forget to post it somewhere? (Well, after I had written that line I got the news that the master of Public Domain Software, Thierry Godefroy had written such a device and was Beta testing it at the moment. I had no prior knowledge of this and anyway that is not what I meant. See Byts of Wood for more comments on this.) I can copy a sound file from another source onto the Q 40 with no problem what I wanted was sound input. I wanted a way to plug a tape recorder or other audio source into the Q 40 and record that. If the input had been provided then someone might have written the application to do it. Is this not what the concept says? give people the hardware and the open source to the devices and they will all write the software.

The story of why I suggested that there were differences between the various Q40s around is rather complex. The first inkling of this was in Paris when Tony Tebby first demonstrated the colour drivers. He ran code on my machine and got different results to those on his machine. After a lot of testing and examination he found

that he had a different processor to that in my machine and that was the cause. Later, as the the colour drivers began to develop, I received a few beta versions to test. I was very pleased when I was able to start using my Q40 in earnest but I soon realised that some programs just did not work. The principle one was the QLiberator compiler but these easiest one to test was The Lonely Joker. On my Q40 I exec'd the program and it went into a loop with nothing displayed on the screen. I reported this to TT who said that it worked on his Q40. OK check out the BOOT file and remove items to see if there is any interference - no luck. At first I put it down to the processor difference between TT's machine and my own but then TT sent us a test floppy. This loaded a copy of SMSQ/E and fired up several programs including The Lonely Joker. On my machine it failed, on Tony Firshamn's it worked. Tony had just sent three completed Q40s for despatch to users so I tested them. Two failed and one worked. At the time we tested everything we could and I even swapped every removable chip, one by one, on the board which worked with the one which did not. No help. Little wonder we suspected a hardware fault. It was only recently that some light was shed on the problem when Tony found a couple of bugs in SMSQ/E but we are still not 100% sure of the answer.

The thing is that the results were always consistent. One board always worked and the other ones did not. I was told that the bug would produce random errors but this is not random. Small wonder, then, that we concluded there was a difference. Jochen and Tony also agreed with this conclusion.

I put these questions into my column in case someone had an answer to them. I could keep quiet so no-one knew but that is hardly ethical and the more people who are looking the more likelihood there is someone finding a solution. Is that wrong ?

On the whole I think I have given the Q40 my full support but I do refuse to stay quiet when I find a problem or want to suggest improvements.

Claus Next.

In the article by Claus Graf in the last issue there are also some strange assertions. Many people are passionate about their dislike of Windoze and the Gates Empire and there can, indeed, be some strong reasons for this. The latest M$ moves, reported on the Register web site (**www.theregister.co.uk**), were towards an attempt to make it illegal to sell a PC without an operating system - and for Operating System read 'Windows'. This is a kind of totalitarian concept that we can do without. There is, however, room in this world for all systems and you should not let a prejudice against a system/company/manufacturer blind you to the merits of some of its products - or an enthusiasm for it make you hide its defects.

Claus also falls into the classic trap of treating QL as an icon and treating the community of QL users as participants in some kind of religion. He seizes upon the concept that QPC will help the QL to survive as some kind of heresy stating that 'The QL is hardware' and 'QPC is emulator software'. I have broached this subject several times in my columns in the magazine. We can ill afford to start splitting the users in to 'true users' and 'heathens' and anyway the argument is silly. Yes, if you are some kind of obsessive you may think that it is important that it does not use an Intel processor but most people don't. My PC uses an AMD chip so what about that?

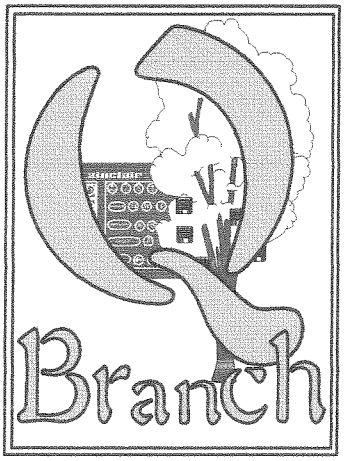
His expertise in programming my allow him to write his own OS but that is not true of most users so, no matter what system they are using, DOS, Windoze, SMSQ, QDOS, Linux etc., they are always at the mercy of that OS. If you use QDOS you do not have 'complete control' you still have to obey the rules that QDOS sets out. It may be that there are less rules but then it is a simpler system and has less inherent capability.

QPC may only run SMSQ/E but then why would I want to run QDOS when SMSQ/E is so much better and has so much more scope? This is no criticism of the great work that Mark Swift put into QDOS Classic or that effort that Lau Reeves made when he wrote Minerva but things move on.

A computer has two main uses. It is both a tool and a source of entertainment. As a tool it needs to be able to perform all of the tasks that you need it to and, if those tasks include editing of complex graphic files, writing CDs, Scanning etc you have to resort systems other than the standard QL. This is obvious - it is also not a punishable offence. The article mentions a few programs 'driven by the Q 40'. Well pqiv is a good viewer and I was impressed when I saw it on the first Q 40 demo but it is just a viewer, no editing, no development. QSplayer is a good sound player but no wav file support and, without the sound input (see above) just a player of files in an obscure format. When I asked Claus how to get files in .ub format to play on the Q 40 I was directed towards 'Awave' a PC program to convert the files.

Sprited is pretty good, and I have not seen the

Q Branch



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high colour fractal software so I will have to go looking. (where might they be - ah, on a web site and to download them on a QL .....) The 3D modelling program is interesting but very basic and purely command line driven. A good start but not a real commercial style application amongst them. The only thing I have seen which may be a real full colour application for the QL is Jim Hunkins proposed QDT and that was developed on, and as a response to, to the facilities offered by QPC 2 version 2. I don't want to be negative here - I want more and better software what I do not want is for people to say you have it already when you clearly have only the first steps on a long and fraught road. Congratulations for taking the first steps - but keep walking.

There was an ugly rumour circulating in the early days of the QXL that the very existence of this card was leading people away from the QL into the world of the PC. It is fairly easy to see how this started and why but, in my experience as a trader, this has never really been the case. Most of the people who bought the QXL already had a PC to put it in and saw it as a way of having two things in the same box. Those that did not, and I was one, managed to get hold of one of the rare Laptops with an ISA slot so we had a portable QL at last. I had my original 386 laptop with its QXL card in it for two years and all it ever ran was SMSQ/E! I used the second, 486, laptop with Windoze 3.1 for internet access and SMSQ/E and it was not until I started running the shop that I really got involved with Windoze 9x at all.

As far as QPC 2 is concerned, lets face it, no one is going to lash out all that money to buy a PC just to run a fast QL. Most of the people who have bought QPC 2 from me have done so because they either

a) needed a PC for some reason (work, compatibility, internet access etc.)

b) were given a second hand unit when their children had upgraded (largest group this)

c) had moved away from the QL and found out about the emulators on the net and wanted to get back into it for fun.

Incidentally, many of the latter group had tried the freeware emulators and had problems getting them up and running so went for the simple solution.

Claus says that he does not know anyone who came to the QL via QPC but I know two. One helped his dad install his, got interested and bought a copy himself and the other worked with a company that kept its records on QLs and wanted a good way to learn to use a QL alongside his PC. I doubt whether either of these use the QL much because the learning curve is steep and the books to learn it are not there but that is not the point.

I also have one customer who bought a Q 40 having abandoned the QL ages ago. He had forgotten a lot of the things he knew about it and missed all the developments over the years so had to come to see me to get a few tips and ideas to get him started. He is now active on the internet user group and may prove to be a valuable asset to the community (Hi Ian!).

Claus also worries about losing people to the PC but I know four QL Users who are now LINUX Users exclusively. Maybe we should not have LINUX on the Q 40 to stop them going over to the other side? or maybe we should ban all mentions of LINUX in this magazine - only joking that point of view is complete rubbish.

Using the Q 40 has forced me to use a PC word processor to write some of my letters these days because I cannot run Text 87 on it (no His-res Mode 4) and I don't like the alternatives of rebooting to run in 512 x 256, an old version of SMSQ/E or using Quill or Perfection. Paragraph is pretty good but just not reliable enough yet.

I have never 'pushed' QPC 2 to anyone. For a long time my adverts for the Q40 were larger and louder than those for QPC and I have, in most of my columns for this magazine, said how much I like using my Q40. This was written on three different computers. It started in the US on my Psion series 5, was transferred to my Q40 and later edited on my laptop under QPC 2. Unfortunately for every person who asked about the Q40 five asked about QPC. I cannot help that.

We cannot fit people with with PC or, for that matter, LINUX sensitive blinkers to stop them seeing, using or hearing about things that may seem to be, or indeed actually be, better than the QL.

What we can do is to try to work together to make our system better, improve our support to the users and stop squabbling like children in a playground about which is the 'true way'.

My last answer

By Wolfgang Uhlig

In the last issue of QL-Today (as well the English as the German one) the Graf-clan again tries to blame a couple of people. What Claus Graf writes about me, however, is such a ridiculous nonsense that I at first did not know whether to laugh or to be annoyed.

I have decided to laugh.

A Bit Puzzled

Jim Hunkins

I have been reading the 'discussion' in the last few issues concerning native QL hardware versus emulators. I am, to be frank, puzzled. With our QL community as small as it is, why would anyone want to set up divisions within it by saying one way is better than another.

Looking at my own usage and preferences, I started up with the QL because I love to tinker. On the QL I could tinker with both the software and hardware, learn from my fellow users, and feel that I was accomplishing something and enjoying myself at the same time.

As the years went by, I wanted to stay with the QL because I loved the system. I almost didn't stay with it because of conflicting interests and severe time limits. What kept me on board? Many things. The friends that I have developed over the years, the development of new software such as SMSQ/E, ProWesS and the high color drivers, and emulators that let me run SMSQ/E anywhere I wanted to. To name just a few things.

I am currently working on a new major piece of software (QDT - the QL DeskTop). It never would have happend if it weren't for the support I am getting and the fact that QPC (the emulator) lets me work on it just about anywhere I go with my handy little laptop. By the way, just because I am not using QL native hardware for my project's development, I hope that no one will write the project off as insignificant, at least until they try it out in person. :) (Sorry - just could not help my self after reading that all major software development was only done on native hardware! Iwill try to behave now.)

I have been reading about the 'pros' and 'cons' of native hardware versus emulators on other platforms, about the evil of Micro $oft, etc. To be honest with you, I don't care either way. The bottom line is, in my case only, QPC2 allows me to keep using my favorite system wherever I go. I imagine if I had more time or different interests, I would be slaving away on a Q40 or Q60 too (almost bought a Q40 about a year ago). These days I tend to be more interested in software for my hobby, probably because I design hardware for a living. (By the way, my occupational choice had a major jump start thanks to my experience with Sinclair computers.)

Today I am with the QL scene primarily because of the community. I will stay with it as long as I can have fun and can possibly find a bit of time to leave the 'real' world behind for my hobby.

I am not about to worry about why someone else uses any form of our systems. Or whether they use them for fun or for business. All I care about is that I can still use it and others are also using it. And that we can share our experiences and continue with our friendships.

My recommendation is that we all keep doing what we are doing, whatever the reason. And, above all, continue to enjoy ourselves and our friendships.

Keep QLing.

Three in one

Jochen Merz

Some facts and comments regarding Claus Grafs article. I do not want to advertise QPC here the way Claus, in my opinion, advertised Q40, but as I am selling QPC to customers I have a pretty good idea what people want and why they want it. As I am a QL user, a QL dealer and a QL magazine editor/publisher, I feel addressed by Claus article in each of the functions. I don't want to reply three times by splitting up the viewpoints. So here they are all together.

User/Editor:

I cannot see Wolfgang Uhlig "praising" Windows. In fact, he uses the word "Windows" only a few times in his article, whereas you, Claus, refer to M$ and Windows about 10 times as often in your article. Why complain about Wolfgang referring to Windows in the QPC relationship (which is very much QL related, even if you don't like it) and refer even more to Linux yourself? We certainly do not want a PC-QL Today, but we also don't want a Linux QL Today either. Let's face it: Wolfgang does not benefit from anything at all by telling us his opinions, whereas your opinions could be regarded as self-advertising for your brothers product.

Dealer:

Fact: QPC has brought several ex-QLers back to the QL world.

Fact: I know many customers who would have given up on our system had there not been QPC.

Fact: Without QPC we would not have portable QDOS/SMSQ systems.

Is all that so bad?

Windows may not be easy to set up. But putting SMSQ/E on a pre-installed system (this is what you buy nowadays) is dead easy - you really exaggerate here. You do not even have to "install" it in any way, just double click it on the disk. As long as you use Windows to run QPC only, all the negative items you list do not apply at all.

User/Dealer:

Unfortunately, and I really say unfortunately, there

have been no large commercial applications written for the QL. However, this situation exists for at least 5 years. Can QPC (which was not available at this time) be blamed for this?

Dealer:

Claus states that without the Q40 there would be no colour drivers. Maybe the "yet" is missing. Without Tony Tebby there would be no colour drivers at all. However, the Q40 has helped by speeding up the development a lot.

I still cannot see why people should only be allowed to us this or the other system, and why using Linux should be better or worse than using Windows.

My feeling is that most people use QDOS/SMSQ because they can do with it what THEY want and, more important, the way THEY want to do it. Programming the system in BASIC is very useful for many QLers, and it works the same way on any system - QL, Q40, QPC, whatsoever. At the speed current systems work, I'd say that speed is not really the issue anymore. It is the way the overall work can be done. And I ***still*** prefer to use my TT to do most of my daily work although the Q40 and QPC on my PC is several times faster.

Many people use a QDOS/SMSQ system because they like it the way it is. I agree that it would be nice to have more large applications, but how many will be sold? It is not the applications which hold the QL scene together, it is the toolkits, extensions and system management software which allow the users to set up their systems individually and do THEIR work. I do my work for QL Today on various systems, and I use the bits which I find most useful of each system. Picture scanning is done under Windows, text input and conversion under SMSQ, layout under TOS (the ATARI operating system). Still, the rest of the work (except for email and internet stuff) is done under SMSQ/E and will be done that way for the future. I do have a personal interest in SMSQ/E, not just being a QL dealer.

Believe me, Claus, and I can speak for the other dealers too: we're trying our best to keep everything going - there is not much commercial in it nowadays (let alone making much profit) and I think we are doing pretty well considering this. We'd be happy to sell products (this would at least help covering the expenses for travelling to the QL shows) - and whatever helps to get more applications is appreciated by us. However, if I had to switch to Linux to use them on the Q40, they are even less helpful. I'd rather have them for QDOS/SMSQ as this would mean I could run them on all of my systems and - trying not to be short-sightened, they could actually be sold to more customers than just Q40 customers.

When we asked customers what sort of applications they would like, there were next to no replies except for the major wish of internet/email access. This says a lot, and can be interpreted in various ways. Speaking to the customers shows that they are fairly happy with what they have because it runs THEIR programs and allows them to develop programs/tools to suit their needs. If you speak to 100 QLers about the use of their system, you'll probably get 95 different replies and about 60 different wishes. Can these wishes be fulfilled? Yes and No, I'd say. We don't have big blown-up programs which fill your harddisk and memory and which the individual user only needs 5% ... but we have the tools to allow the user to combine them in a way he wants.

I like your idea of how user requests should enforce programmers to come up with what the users want and I really wished it would be more realistic. Looking at your list of recent developments, I find lots of useful tools, but we are still lacking a major killer application which would bring new people to the QL scene.

How many "commercial" programs are on your list of recent developments? Are there any? It is very nice of the programmers that they release their work for free, but this is not really aiming towards your (and our) hopes and ideas, unfortunately. A QL dealer just cannot survive by travelling around and selling the odd ZX8301 or pack of disks. In addition, this list underlines my theory of how/why QL programs are created. Not because of a driving market force. I have been the QL scene for 15 or 16 years now, and most programs were created because the author was lacking a tool for himself, or just liked to program it. Later, he thought about it - and maybe because he showed it to other people this turned into a commercial product by adding more features, a better user interface, and in the next stage, it improved due to user feedback. This is good in some ways, as most products we are using are done by users for users, and this is why they are useful and we like to use them.

Giving everything away for free is nice, but does it really help? Will this lead to more programs? Who would undertake the risk to spend months and months programming for the QL (which is financially not rewarding anyway) when a similar program may be available for free two weeks earlier or later? In larger markets, programmers would not worry too much about it, because there will be sales although there is a lot of similar free or shareware stuff around - just selling to 1/1000th of their user base may make it worthwhile. Unfortunately, this is not true for the

QL scene. So, I would not mind to pay for programs which I use. In fact, when PBOX came out some years ago, I started to collect money on a voluntarily base and handed it over to Phil Borman, although it was free. This shows that people are willing to pay for something useful.
Finally, consider how long we are waiting for the internet access to happen (and this is a collective wish, not a 1 out of 1000). Let's hope at least this one becomes a reality very soon.
Fortunately, there were and still are positive exceptions to what I said above. The forthcoming QDT program is designed to take user wishes into account right from the start. From what Jim Hunkins explained during his talk at the US show, I am sure this is something most of you would like to buy immediately.

Steve Hall writes:

Peter Graf wrote a rather scathing response to Roy Woods remarks in the previous issue, regarding the recent QL Users mail group, Q40 v QPC debate.
Roy was pointing out some personal comparison observations and some of the pitfalls of either system. User perception is what really matters, technical merit is only of secondary importance. Should QL users choose to upgrade, they will choose the route that best suits their individual circumstances. Benchmarks, purism and technical merit are unlikely to influence that decision much.
In my opinion the Q40 offers me a fast QL and a slow Linux machine (if I want it) with limited hardware expansion potential. With QPC2 on an up-to-date PC (running Windows) I have a fast QL, a fast Linux machine (see above) and a fast Windows machine (contradiction in terms?) with hardware upgrade and expansion only limited by what is currently available. For me; no contest.
Purists and Wintelphobes may disagree.
There is more than enough room for these very different products in the market, so nit picking on the basis of technical merit, between them is largely irrelevant.

Marcel Kilgus writes:

Warning: this is another article on the everlasting Q40 vs. QPC argument. I know many of you are bored by this, but there are some things in the articles of Claus and Peter Graf I just have to reply to. I'll try to keep my speech short, though, therefore I'll just skip Claus' discussion of Wolfgang's article. It seems to me that Claus has read a version different from the one in my QL Today anyway.
What I have to answer however is his "why QPC is no QL" column. This implicates by the way that QPC users are no QL users and therefore are no part of the QL community. This offends QPC users. They're waiting for an apology [...] (any similarities with Claus' article are purely coincidental. Or maybe it's just sarcasm).

"A QL is not an Intel PC [...]"
To be precise: a QL is a black box, designed and manufactured by Sinclair. Therefore neither the Q40 nor QPC can ever be a QL. The only thing they can be is "compatible". Like QPC the Q40 hardware is not hardware compatible to the QL. What's remaining is software compatibility, and that's in fact exactly what QPC provides.
Originally I was going to address the other claims in a similar manner, but as we now already know that neither the Q40 nor QPC is a QL I spare you the rest.
My conclusion was and still is: Some people will prefer native hardware, some people will prefer emulators. The QL community would lose many members if one of the two got lost, regardless which one.
Now to Peter's article:
"The author [me, Marcel] called it [QPC] a 'QL' and a 'platform all by itself'. At this point I feel free to say that the Q40, not QPC, really is a platform to run different operating systems."
I've never claimed that you can run all OSs you want on QPC, so what's the point? Obviously the whole confusion just originated in different definitions of "platform". Mine's this: QPC does not emulate any hardware available on the planet (and even beyond, I think). Therefore it's a QL platform of its own and not only an emulator for some other platform. It's as simple as that.
Peter says that he cannot imagine how Roy could have the impression that QPC was faster than his Q40. He answers that the overall performance of a Q40 is clearly better than on the mentioned QPC machine. This is true, however most application don't rely much on the "overall" performance but do specific tasks which can, due to several improved routines in QPC, be considerably faster. To give examples: on an Athlon 700 the Test909 math benchmarks is 4 times and the graphics benchmark is 2,5 times as fast as on a Q40. This does not mean that QPC is faster in general, but on certain applications it CAN be noticeably faster. I know that in order to completely compete with a Q40, even in pure processor speed, one needs at least an Athlon 1400 (to provide facts: QPC scores 2 bogomips more (6%) and 700 dhrystone less (2%) than the numbers Peter himself provided for the Q40). But that's

not what Roy said. He said that in the end it matters how fast the applications run and this heavily depends on the application.
At the end I'd like to thank Peter for his remark of having audio input through the CD-ROM drive. This really made my day (hmmm, looking at it this way even QPC has audio input. And even output, as it can play audio CDs directly ;-)
Long live the QL *community*!

Wolfgang Lenerz writes:

This week I felt like doing something rather nasty, and since the Editor of this august publication invited the users to comment on the QPC v. Q40 debate, I thought I'd do that, but then I thought of something even nastier - why not comment, for once, on an entire edition of QL Today (or "QL Toady" as some would have us believe). Of course, it is always easy to criticize people for their opinions they have had the courage to publish (which is why I felt nasty...).
Ok, so in no particular order (or rather the order of the original articles as appered in QL Today) here it goes.
First to come under fire is Geoff Wicks, who imprudently voices the opinion that speed is of no essence (as long as you have reached a sufficient speed, e.g. Gold Card), and that today's machines have more than enough memory etc. To quote: "how many of us really need more than the 4 MB of the Super Gold Card?". Well, I certainly do. My main "QL" has about 32 MB of memory, and of that, there are routinely only 20 MB free.
I just have a lot of things running in the machine at once (hence, also the need for speed). And this is when I'm NOT developing a program, when I'd be having a compiler, several editors, Basic Linker etc running as well. Of course, I could do with less programs loaded into memory at once- I'd just have to unload/load programs as and when I need them. But the purpose of a computer is to make our lives easier (even though it often seems to be the contrary), so if I can have all of my programs loaded and at my beck and (altkey) call, why not? So, I could make do with less speed and less memory - but I wouldn't want to.
Geoff asks himself why somebody would want to multitask 12 programs or more. The answer is quite easy, if, in this context "multitasking" is meant as having the ability to call programs up via an Altkey VERY quickly: because this corresponds to the way most people work - and mostly not because of choice, but because of necessity. In a typical office day (where I still use the QL), I am constantly interrupted - by the telephone, the fax, a secretary or even myself if I remember that I have to do something urgently. That also means that I constantly switch between a fax program, a contacts management program, an accounting program (when the post with the cheques comes in :-)), a case management program, a calculator, a word processor, a spellchecker, a files management program and whatnot.
The advantage of the QL is that I can have that flexibility - why should I forego it?
Geoff then mentiones the myriad extensions that exist, and whether we need them all. I, for one, routinely load and use Prowess for some homemade programs (for example, Proforma is the easiest thing I have found to print sideways, e.g. large spreadsheets) so I always load the extensions that go with it. Actually, I ALWAYS load 35 extension files - things like the manu extensions, Qmon/Jmon, Qpac2, fileinfo, the Qlib extensions, the Prowess extensions, Datadesign engine and so on. How many of then do I use daily? All of them! They are all used by some of my programs, and I'm quite aware of what they do, thank you.
I'm also quite capable of remembering what my keyboard shortcuts do: nearly all of my keys (and some shifted, too) are made into altkeys - and I remember every single one of them, because I use them daily or nearly so. As to the question of whether it is better to have a "soviet general's" button list, or a minimalist approach, I think that it a question of personal taste. Personally, since I use Altkeys, I don't need many buttons - that also leaves me more screen real estate for my other programs.
Continuing my perusal of QL Today, I come accross Roy Wood's series on getting into QPAC2. This sort of series always leaves me a bit bemused - not, I hasten to add, because of its intrinsic value or the content that Roy has so painstakenly put into it, but because even today there still is a need for it. I don't remember when exactly QPAC2 came out, but it was quite a long time ago - it must have been over 10 years now. It is a widely used package, and if Roy feels the need to explain it today, that must mean that many people still feel that they are underusing it, and that it is quite complicated. So what have these people been using until now, and why haven't they got any help before? I know for a fact that the QL community is a very helpful one - if you have email access, just look at the QL discussion group. Anybody who asks a question there (even if it is for the umptieth time the same question) gets help quickly - generally within a day.

So, the fact that people, after all this time, still feel intimidated by Qpac2 means - what?
Now for some praise: Gee Graphics (on the QL?) is certainly the longest running series in any QL publication, I think. We're now at part 22! H.L. Schaaf is really doing his bit for the QL community, and I thought that we should give him a big round of applause. It is not easy (I know, I tried) to write a regular column, even every 2 months, and he succeeds admirably! Well done!
Alright, now we come to last issue's central debate: so what are you - QPC or Q40? The anwser is (MUST BE): BOTH of course! The QPC/Q40 debate has also been quite lively for some time on the email list. I must say that I'm getting a bit bored with it. I must also say that, in my opinion, anybody who thinks that one solution is IT and the other is NOTHING is just a complete idiot. Both solutions have their Pros and their Cons, unfortunately, and notably on the mailing list, the debate got quite sidetracked by issues such as whether QPC is a "platform" or not. I mean WHO CARES? All I want to know is does this and that run my software? Yes? OK, fine. No? Throw it away, then.
Thus, the whole discussion (started, I think by a polemic piece by Wilfgang Uhlig) about what IS a QL (or a platform) or not, is entirely sterile, and, I think moot from a user's point of view: a user is interested in whether or not "it" can run his/her software. It is true that if you are a bit of a QL fanatic (as I admit to being), then the praise for Windows (or Linux, or Ataridos or whatever) does get a bit on ones nerves, but perhaps we should regard those people who sing this praise with a bit of indulgence - apparently, they know no better - their's the pity! And if that sounds "arrogant" and/or "unbelievably stupid" then I perfectly assume my arrogance and stupidity (and you should stop reading this if you agree!).

BOTH Q40 and QPC run existing QL software. I have used QPC extensively over the last few years, and I know that it works. I'll be getting a Q60 shortly (hopefully it will already be here when you read this) and I'm quite certain it'll work, too. If the question is which you should buy, then the answer is that you can either be as crazy as I am and buy both, because both deserve to be bought, or look at your requirements:
The Q40/60 is the natural upgrade path from an all QL solution existing today. You'll get a fast modern machine that works. You even get Linux thrown in for free (not that that's an improvement). Buying a Q40 if you want/have an all QL solution makes sense: it is the fastest machine around and is specially developped for our OS. You'll be able to use it for years and years to come.
QPC is very useful if you already have a windows machine. In this respect, I would side with Peter: don't buy a Windows machine only to run QPC on. Buy QPC is you HAVE TO use a Windows machine for another reason. Buying QPC, if you already have a Windows machine, makes sense: you have one computer, instead of two, and it is also cheaper than buying a windows box and a Q40.
I don't buy Peter's argument that using QPC under Windows will lure you away from the QL world, and that only the Q40 was responsible for a certain number of new developments in the QL world. I would NOT have programmed Agenda if I hadn't had QPC, which allowed me to run Prowess at an acceptable speed.
The defenders of the Q40 often forget that people buy QPC because they already have a PC. And why do they have a PC? Well, to do things such as email, internet surfing, playing games, running the software they have to use at the office, digitize movies etc...
You can't ignore the world going by. You can't ignore, if you need it, that there are machine that can do things the QL can't do. The QL can't do them, because there are not enough software authors, or because those there are still there don't have the abilities required. I know that I can program the QL - but even if I wanted to, I couldn't write a video editing suite for the QL, simply because I wouldn't know how.
The lack of software in the QL world is an oft-decried phenomenon, and one I don't need to go into here. However, Peter should realise that if people go the Wintel route, it is often because they don't have any choice. I know how often I had to re-install the *-*/# Windows OS - do you really think I would put up with that if I had a completely sufficient QL solution at hand?

Ultimately, and here Peter is right, it is also a question of what you want to do with your money. You can get a pretty fast Windows box with QPC for the money you need to buy a complete Q40. However, this is due more to economics of scale than anything else: the Q40 is handbuild in very few numbers, but buying one ensures that you support a superb hardware devlopment, one of the few still going on (and producing results) in the QL world (may Nasta forgive me).
Of course, buying QPC also ensures that you support a superb software developments in the QL world. So what should you do? Perhaps be a bit crazy, and buy both - one because you need to, one because you want to...

I presume that I'm not the only one to have commented on the QPC/Q40 debate, and I don't want to leave it before having told Peter and Marcel how much I respect the work they have done. If you had access to the QL mailing list, where this debate has also been going on, you might have noticed that both the protagonists were actually much quieter than many of the debaters (even though Peter was more active) and both always agreed to state that the other's development was worthwhile.
Continuing my perusal of last issue's QL Today, then, we come across some useful articles on PRINT_USING and also printer drivers. Isn't it funny how some subjects stay with us from day 1? Using Quill and printers has been a subject for articles since the very first Quanta magazine - and today, it still is with us. That also shows how we, as a community, are able to react to technological changes, because when Quill was written, nobody really thought that one day it would be used with a laser printer! Actually, since I recently got a second hand printer that uses PCL emulation mode, I'm quite looking forward to the next instalment of that series...

QL Forever!

David Denham writes:

Well done QL Today, on making an issue of a subject few of us believed to be contentious. I for one am quite happy with my QL and Gold Card. It serves my computing needs well enough. I run a small business and write my own programs in QL BASIC. I am unlikely to be able to afford either a Wintel box or Q40 or Q60 on my income, so the whole debate is irrelevant to many of us I feel and the Graf-Uhlig et al debate is boring as far as I'm concerned. If I have to comment either way, I'd say that QPC is the best route for those who already are mad enough to go the Wintel route. It provides the means to turn those devices into something that QL traditionalists such as I would understand. And for those who may have bought the Wintels to be compatible with work needs for example, it keeps them with QDOS. No problem with that part of the equation. For those who can afford it and who prefer the QL hardware route, Q40 and Q60 are the best routes. No problem with that either. In other words, what's the problem? Both QPC2 and Q40 have their places, to suit the needs of the QLer concerned. Is QPC likely to lure QLers away into becoming PCers? Well, is Q40 likely to make us into Linux penguins (given that one of the attractions of Q40 is the version of Linux available)? In that sense, the criticism of QPC may also apply to the Q40! The editor of QL Today does not help this debate. He often moans about his PC system but praises QPC then longs for the 'TCP/IP' system often mentioned but rarely seen in QL public. Given the amount of 'internet' mentions in QL Today, I guess he must be using the PC for his internet access - it must work so why complain about it if using it? In conclusion, I feel this is a non-issue. One system will suit the needs of some, the other will suit the needs of others. Both can help keep the QL scene going and you'll always have fans of one system or the other.
Now to come clean. Being on a low income, I can't really afford to subscribe to QL Today - a friend and I "share" the subscription and both read the same issue. Feeling a bit guilty about that I send the editors the occasional article for publication to repay the efforts of the publishers in bringing us a magazine I generally enjoy reading, even if some of the content is too advanced for me. I enjoy tackling new things and sharing my discoveries (hence my article about PRINT_USING in a recent issue). Hope you find them useful. Now I will go away and dream about affording a Goldfire or Q60!

Congratulation! You made it through!
At the time I layed out all the articles I had to read through them, of course. And I am glad I read them. Although they are all fairly different, they have many things in common. And several viewpoints seem to match, actually scoring on "both sides". Which shows that there is no general "pro or against" - at least not from the majority. And if some people feel that one or the other product is better suited for them - fine! - then it is something which has to be accepted too. Everybody had his/her chance to state her view, Peter and Claus have their final chance to reply if they wish so - and then (at least for QL Today) this story will end. And regarding QL Today itself: we believe in support of EVERY QL compatible system. It is natural that more recent products get more publicity than older ones ... and if you feel older systems need more support than start writing an article now about your use of your system or what you would like to be published - QL Today lives from your feedback!

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Default Drives

David Denham

Toolkit 2 users have a little luxury on their systems, in the form of default drive names and directory names. While these facilities are commonly used, it is also common for them not to be fully understood as well, so hopefully this article will help the less experienced users to understand a little bit more about how to use default drives and directories on the QL.
The most obvious purpose of these commands is to save you some typing!

If you keep all of your data files on FLP2_ and all of your programs on FLP1_, it would be nice to be able to omit the drive name when copying, saving or loading files.

For example, instead of
`EXEC_W FLP1_QUILL`
It would be nice to be able to `EXEC_W QUILL`.
And instead of `SAVE FLP2_MYPROGRAM_BAS` it would be nice to be able to save some typing by using the command `SAVE MYPROGRAM_BAS`. This is especially useful if you have a hard disk system, or are in the habit of using subdirectories on your floppy disks. Of course, this is only possible if your system has the facilities to create and read these sub-directories. Older floppy disk systems (I think this includes Trump Cards) don't have this feature, but newer ones like Gold Card, Super Gold Card, QXL, Q40 do. ***[Some emulators such as version 2 of QemuLator and QPC also have this feature - Editor]***
So if your programs are held on your hard disk in a directory called WIN1_MYPROGRAMS_ for example, imagine the saving in typing between
`EXEC_W WIN1_MYPROGRAMS_ARCHIVE` and
`EXEC_W ARCHIVE`
Toolkit 2 provides the facility to set a default drive for executable programs and for data files separately. The facility is available from SuperBASIC via two extensions to BASIC - the PROG_USE and DATA_USE commands.

`PROG_USE FLP1_`
This command will allow programs to be started by default from FLP1_. Basically, if you type in `EXEC_W MDV1_QUILL` it will still try to execute Quill from microdrive 1. If the program is not found there, the QL tries to append the default name to the name you gave and tries to execute i from there instead, effectively
`EXEC_W FLP1_MDV1_QUILL` Of course, this will fail too, but if you had typed in `EXEC_W QUILL`, the QL would have failed to find that, then tried what was in effect `EXEC_W FLP1_QUILL`

For data files and BASIC programs, the DATA_USE command is used instead. So if you have typed in `DATA_USE FLP1_` then attempt to
`LRUN myprog_bas` the QL would fail to find `myprog_bas` and instead would try `FLP1_myprog_bas`

If you have forgotten what value you set for DATA_USE and PROG_USE or suspect that another program has changed them, there are some functions in Toolkit 2 which will check the settings for you:
`PRINT DATAD$` will check the current DATA_USE default drive name, while
`PRINT PROGD$` will check the current PROG_USE default drive name.

There is a third default setting, called the destination default, which is used by commands like COPY and COPY_N to give a default destination. `DEST_USE SER1` will ensure that the default destination is SER1. If the name supplied ends with a '_' character it is assumed that this is a 'directory' device, i.e. one which stores files.

This can become useful when dealing with 'wildcard' handling commands such as WCOPY, where a default destination can be usefully set for when transferring a large number of files to a given directory. This is rather an advanced subject for this type of beginners article, and we'll skip this for now. One useful feature is that many versions of the extensions will allow you to specify the '_' character to signify 'use default'. For example, `WCOPY '_' TO FLP2_` is equivalent in most cases to `WCOPY DATAD$ TO FLP2_` although `WCOPY RAM1_ TO '_'` does not seem to work as well, since it seems to add '_' to the default, so you get something like Copy `RAM1_EXAMPLE_doc` to `FLP1__EXAMPLE_doc` (i.e. a double underscore). Anyone know what's going on here?

Editor's comment: if you do not want to process the current settings but just "view" them, you can type
`DLIST`
and you will see the current settings of DATA_USE, PROG_USE and DEST_USE!

Gee Graphics! (on the QL?) - part 23

H L Schaaf

Homogeneous coordinates and more MATrix PROCedures

I have had some trouble trying to understand just what "homogeneous" means in the context of computer graphics coordinates. I did find a report(1) from the University of Calgary, Canada. From it we learn that the history of homogeneous coordinates goes back to Kepler and Desargues who were dealing with points at infinity in the 17th century. Mobius carried the ideas further with his weighted barycentric coordinates in 1826. Plucker and Grassman developed projective geometry applications in the 1840's. Larry G. Roberts brought homogeneous coordinates to computer graphic displays in 1965. Even after a couple of Oxford dictionary definitions(2) I'm still wondering what it all means. So many things I've yet to learn.
Speaking of Canada, I must say that the Montreal QL show was a joy, and many thanks to the dedicated few that make such events possible.
Now back to QL graphics and looking ahead in Roger's text I see that I would want a few more QL MATrix PROCedures. For example, I'd like to be able to convert an array of ordinary Euclidean points, lines, etc. into the equivalent homogeneous array. It seems that all we need do is add on a column vector of 1's. And it would also be nice to have a PROCedure to make the reverse conversion from homogeneous back into the ordinary common Euclidean form by just removing the final column. I decided to call the first procedure 'MAT_E2h' and the reverse 'MAT_h2E'. Unfortunately we can't redimension arrays by name reference parameters within SuperBasic PROCedures. Turbo has 'rubber' arrays but I haven't found them in S*BASIC. Thus any redimensioning needs to be done outside of the PROCedures.
A byproduct of thinking about these PROCedures was a desire for PROCedures that would permit clipping a selected block from a source matrix (MAT_GET) and then placing it into a selected location (MAT_PUT) of a destination matrix.
In Roger's text his vectors for points are used as column vectors, while in most of my arrays they have been row vectors. An often used PROCedure for matrices is the Transpose that turns rows into columns and columns into rows, so a MAT_TRN will be added to the list. If only a vector is to be Transposed, it will be treated as a row vector. Another common matrix is the Identity matrix, consisting of ones on the main diagonal

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and zeroes every where else; the PROCedure MAT_IDN should take care of that. Yet another possibly useful PROCedure is 'MAT_FILL' that fills a matrix with a chosen number.
Oh yes, another thought. I see that I've used many temporary 'Work_' matrices that have been useful during the debugging stages, but could (or should?) be cleared out every now and then for the sake of memory. The 'CLR_WORKMATS' PROCedure will redimension them all to 0.
As usual we continue to tweak what we've done before, so I've added a few refinements to be merged into the 'MATFuNPROCs_bas' from GG#18. I've included the changes mentioned in GG#19 and a few lines have been inserted into 'MAT_SHOW' to handle the ocassional vector.
All in all it will be interesting, and if I'm done and can exercise these added PROCedures by the editors deadline I'll include the listing; otherwise, some time in the future?
For a future article I hope to explore a more graphical subject, "Circles within circles", the cover story of Science News for April 21, 2001. Take a look if you get a chance.

(1) "Homogeneous Coordinates", Jules Bloomenthal & Jon Rokne, Technical Report 1993-516-21 March 1, 1993 Department of Computer Science The University of Calgary.
http://pharos.cs.calgary.ca
(2) homogeneous =
1) Of the same kind so as to be commensurable.
2) Of the same degree or dimension: consisting of terms of the same dimension.

Listing "MATFuNPROCs_pt2" to be presented later.

Exploring the QLCF library

Jérôme Grimbert

There are many extensions to the basic in the QLCF library. So I think it may be interesting for someone to have an overview of what has been already done. I remind that the QLCF library is freely available to any QLCF member (well, nearly free: the requester has to provide the librarian with the media as well as the return postage and parcel; so the librarian does not handle any money, and the requester only supports the costs to send and get back his own media). It is even better for the QLCF members on the 1999/2000 roll, there is a CD available since the 2000 Paris meeting in October (it will also be available at the 2001 Paris meeting, for the ones who will be there). The CD is free also, the only things to provide to the librarian is the request for it, as well as the parcel (a 13 cm envelop with some air/paper padding is usually fine, a crystal box CD must fit) and the relevant postage (more than 100g, about 13 French francs, check with your post office). The address of the QLCF librarian is Jérôme Grimbert, 1 Allée Louis Roveyaz, 78140 Vélizy. And for the Internet-aware QLCF members, they can retrieve the library directly from "**http://smsqe.free.fr/**". Enough with the 'how can you get it', it's time for the exploration...

QLCF1

First, let's start with some off-topic stuff. Not really an extension, but the very first volume of the QLCF library started already with some assembly by Wolfgang Lenerz which provide an automatic periodic saving of Quill document. There is even two variants, either saving always with the same name, or saving alternatively on two differents files. It was a time when the QL may not have been reliable on long run, so this functionality has probably been very useful to the QLers which wrote long documents on Quill. The source code is provided: It works by creating a Job which push, at the right time, the key sequence into the keyboard queue.

QLCF2

Lots of assembly on this volume, even a symbolic assembler, but only one keyword. HARDCOPY is a basic keyword that will dump the screen to an Epson compatible printer.

QLCF3

A crypting file utility: LOCK and UNLOCK. Using an integer, a string and the QL ROM image, it provides the confidentiality some may have needed.

QLCF4

Apparently, the time to load a big basic program was really too much. So we now have some quick saving and loading keyword: SAUVEV, CHARV and LANCEV.

QLCF5

STAMP allows to push a string in the keyboard queue. PLOT draws, quickly, a point with the screen pixel coordinates (the physical ones, not the floating ones of POINT). SWIND and LWIND saves and loads a part of the screen into and from a file. CONVERT performs the copy of a file while

replacing a string with another. It is very useful for transfering from mdv to flp. NAME allows to set a name to executable files which do not have one already (the '** Anon **' entries in LIST_TASK of Supercharge). Quill is an example of such bad program. There is also an extension for the Eidersoft Mice, so as to provide an emulation of keystrokes (just like INKEY$) when using the mice. It's turned on with KEMTRON and off with KEMTROFF

QLCF6

PRIO allows to change the priority of the job which uses it. It works also with compiled program.

QLCF8

ZOOM makes some video effect to an open window: it enlarges a window, just as if it was zoomed in (the window gets bigger, but its center stays at the same place). Do not dream to much, the content of the window is lost anyway.

QLCF18

Before the PE, a sprite device (SPR), which saved the screen part under it. It comes with SPCOPY, SPSWITCH, SPXOR and SPMOVE keywords. A corrected version of PLOT (previous version had trouble handling a bad number of parameters), as well as a corrected version of the Eidersoft Mice (KEMTRON and KEMTROFF).

QLCF20

UNJOB allow to remove the Executable property from a file. Useful when generating a Basic extension with an assembler which always thinks that it generates a program. CONCAT perform the concatenation of two files into a third one.

QLCF21

ETAT is a new keyword that allow to check the status of a file (Does it exist ? In use ?). It can help to avoid a stop of a program due to an error on file.

QLCF30

GPOINT is a replacement of the bogus POINT (the MG version displays two points instead of one). a direct replacement of POINT is also provided.

QLCF37

SCRA, SCR0, SCR1, SCRNUM, WIDSCR1 and ADDSCR1 performs some tricks with the second screen block and the switching of the display on the black QL. And yet another extension: MOVFEN, it allows to move the memory display (of a window) into a super-area, which might be bigger than the actual display size. And there might be more than one super-area at the same time. Who says virtual screen?

QLCF39

DESK_IN and DESK_OUT convert between the screen format and the one of desktop publisher.

QLCF41

COMPRESS, EXPAND and FASTEXPAND deals with compressed screen files and the QL display.

QLCF43

REDUCED allow to change the font size of a window. Of course, the font can also be changed with this command. QCOPY performs a quick copy between two devices. It is similar to WCOPY of TK2, but without confirmation. So it's ideal for automatic programs on boot.

QLCF45

DE_QL and VERS_QL converts all the files from a device to the QL caracters set from the IBM one, or vice versa.

QLCF46

MINMAJ convert in one file the lower cases into upper cases, or vice versa. For the math-intensive, there is also some double precision numbers which are made available to QDOS via DOUBLE, DGET, DPUT, DLET, DP% and DP$.

QLCF47

A capslock indicator using the QL speaker is driven with CAPSON and CAPSOFF. LWC$ and UPC$ are functions which convert a string to lower or upper cases. NDIM% return the number of dimensions of an array. Because, sometime, DIMN is not enough!

QLCF48

TRUE% and FALSE% functions. Some people really likes clean programming. SWAP avoids using a third temporary variables to swap the values of two variables.

QLCF50

BIT% is a function that allows to scan the bits from an integer.

QLCF51

TRIM$ is a function that remove the spaces from both end of a string. REV$ is a function that reverse a string. WM is a keyword which change

the size of the #1 & #2 so as to leave enough room for two row of text buttons.

QLCF52

SGN% return the sign of a number (either 1, 0 or -1).

QLCF55

MIN and MAX, on nearly unlimited number of parameters. That's QL bonus! FRACT is a function that gives the fractional part of a value.

QLCF56

TRINT, PROUND and DROUND are some additional functions that deals with rounding of float value. DROUND performs on a specified number of digits. PROUND works with power of ten while TRINT only return the integer part (that's not the same as INT for negative value. SAR, SARO, LAR, SEARCH and SORT are arrays handling routines (Save on file, save and overwrite, load from file, search a string arrays, sort a string arrays)

QLCF58

Yet another video handling extension: SSAVE, SSHOW, SLOAD, SMOVE, SSTAT, SCROF, SCRON, SAUTO.

QLCF59

FACT provide the factoriel of an integer. DESPR allows access to the deallocation routine. NOKEY and KEY manages a set of up to 60 functions keys that can be programmed to insert some strings in the keyboard queue. There is also an updated version of MIN and MAX (from QLCF55).

QLCF60

PTR_X, PTR_Y, RTP_R and RTP_T performs conversions between polar and rectangular coordinates.

QLCF64

33 additional functions which play with bits: BTST, BCHG, BCLR, BSET, AND_L, AND_W, AND_B, IOR_L, IOR_W, IOR_B, EOR_L, EOR_W, EOR_B, LSL_L, LSL_W, LSL_B, LSR_L, LSR_W, LSR_B, ROL_L, ROL_W, ROL_B, ROR_L, ROR_W, ROR_B, NOT_L, NOT_W, NOT_B, SWP_L, SWP_W, SWP_B, EXT_L, EXT_W. Looks like someone is missing some direct assembly when programming in Basic. More interrogations of a window are possible with XUSIZ, YUSIZ, XUORG, YUORG, XUCUR, YUCUR, TANGL and TPEN% (size, origin, graphical cursor position, angle of the turtle and status of the turtle pen).

QLCF67 (still under construction)

POKE_F and PEEK_F use floating point where POKE_L and PEEK_L used long word. Similarly, there is also POKE$ and PEEK$ which do it with strings. GCD% gives the greatest common divisor of two integers. LCM% gives the smallest common multiple of two integers. OUTLN makes the window#0 managed by the PE. SDEVS provide the list of simple devices to the user. DDEVS provide the list of directory devices to the user. BUFI$ return as a strings the encoding of a part of the memory, given its length and start address. BUFO store the encoded string at a new address. INVERT provides the set of permutations for upto 9 strings. ANAG provides the set of permutations for the characters of one string. BOX and BOX_R draw one or many boxes in a window. CPOLYG draws one or many closed regular polygons. OPOLYG draws only part of them (so they are open). FPNMIN, FPNMAX, FPPMIN and FPPMAX returns the extrem values for floating point. The latest update of FP, FP$, DFP and DFP$ is also there. WHICH gives the list of keyword that match the beginning of a string. ISIT% answers the eternal question: Is the keyword present ? (It also tells if it is a function or a procedure).

Ifs6

BTN may help the SBasic programs to reduce to a simple button. HOT_BUT allows you to create a button that will perform a HOT_DO when clicked.

Ifs21

FP is a function that provides you with the floating point value that correspond to the six bytes you provide. FP$ is a function that provides inside view of the six bytes used for the encoding of a floating point value. FPD$ performs the same than FP$, but on double float values as used by DP_MODULE (and it prints 10 bytes) OCT returns the floating value whose value is the octal interpretation of its argument. OCT$ returns a string that is the octal coding of the float argument (a second argument may be specified, as precision requested). OCT and OCT$ are similar to HEX and HEX$ as well as DEC and DEC$.

That's all for the time being. I will probably try to make yet another tutorial which explains and demonstrates how some of these extensions work when I will have more time (In the meantime, the readers are welcome to orient my choice on one or another extensions of particular interest).

Bill Richardson is organising a coach/flight from the UK to the Berchtesgaden German/Austrian QL Show If you want to join in please contact Bill!

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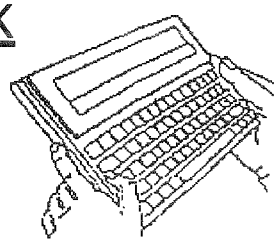

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QTYP Revisited

Geoff Wicks

A couple of issues ago I wrote about compiling your own QTYP dictionaries, and received some lengthy, but interesting, emails in response to the article. Dietrich Bruder felt much more could be written about QTYP and Al Boehm made a worthwhile suggestion for using QTYP in one of his own programs.

For me QTYP is an unusual program, because initially I had an intense dislike for it, but now the more I explore it, the more I like it.

What changed my opinion? Some answers could be found in the emails from Dietrich. He felt I had concentrated on one small part of QTYP and that it is comparitively unknown piece of software, which deserves more attention.

QTYP is surprisingly versatile. Strictly speaking it is not a spellchecker, but a series of extensions that allow you to do spellchecking. When you buy QTYP you get no fewer than 3 versions of the program, QTYP, QTYP_FILE and QTYP_SPELL. You also get dictionaries, a configuration program and a dictionary editor. You can even customise QTYP for your own programs, but more of that later.

One of the points Dietrich made is that you can link QTYP with almost any program. All you do is start the program, then press the hot key you have set up to activate QTYP to spellcheck as you type. The programs that do not work with QTYP are those, like Perfection, that grab all CTRL + letter key combinations making it impossible to call up the QTYP menu. If you obtained your version of QTYP with Text87, you will be unable to spellcheck as you type. The version supplied with Text87 is QTYP_SPELL and for real time spell checking you need QTYP.

Dietrich and I differ in our opinions of real time spell checking. He likes it and I hate it. When you have QTYP set for real time working, you hear a beep with each keypress. As soon as the first few letters of the word you are typing can no longer be found in the QTYP dictionary, the sound of the beep changes. You press CTRL + t, or a combination of your own choice, to call up the QTYP menu.

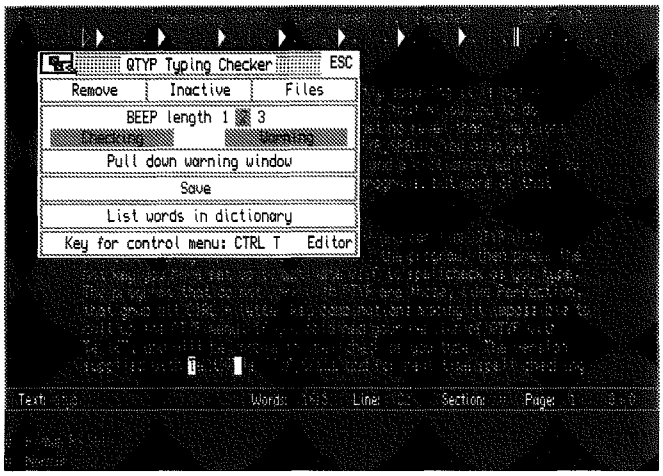
In my opinion this is a poorly designed menu (see figure). When you are spellchecking you want quick access to the dictionary, but the command for this is buried on the 6th row of menu items. The other rows have useful commands for configuring QTYP, but you will only use these occasionally. The menu item you most use should always be at the top.

Call up the dictionary and it will display only a small number of words. QTYP works by checking a word letter by letter. If I type "accommodate" as "acommodate", QTYP will buzz when I have typed "acom". If I call up the dictionary I first have to delete the last letter, in this case "m" and QTYP then suggests the words "acorn", "acorns", "acoustic" and "acoustics". Not much use when I am trying to spell "accommodate".

Dietrich made the point that QTYP does not work phonetically, and we cannot expect a phonetic spellchecker for the QL. Even assuming we had someone in the QL community skilled in phonetics, he would not have the time to write a phonetic dictionary on his own. (And each language would require its own phonetic specialist. At the moment I am writing a dictionary for finding rhymes, which is partially phonetic. I am only interested in the sound at the end of a word, and not the whole word, but it has taken me a lot longer than I expected.

The QL does have an approximation to a phonetic dictionary in a program called "Suggest". This works on the assumption that most spelling errors are either typos, that is hitting the wrong key; phonetic errors such as confusing in English "ee" and "ea"; or not knowing whether, for example, the past tense of "travel" is "traveled" or "travelled". When QTYP finds a word that is not in its dictionary, Suggest looks through a list of rules and uses them to make a list of possible words that the writer had intended to use. It then checks these in the dictionary. For example many people spell "grammar" as "grammer", so Suggest will have a rule to try substituting an e for each a.

I shall not describe Suggest at any length, because I have written about it before (QL Today Volume 1 Issue 6 page 40). It was when someone asked me to write a Dutch rule file for Suggest that I started to like QTYP. A typical Suggest rule file has about 350 rules that have to be applied to each word, so you can imagine how many possible words it generates. Each of these has to be checked against the QTYP dictionary, but it gives its suggestions almost instantly.



It is similar with my freeware program SPELLING-CRIB. This allows you to search any QTYP dictionary to check the spelling of a word. Many people find "accommodate" difficult to spell, and if you enter "ac/te" into SPELLING-CRIB it finds all words beginning with "ac" and ending in "te". My QTYP English dictionary has 345 words beginning with "ac" and SPELLING-CRIB has to check each of these to see if they also end in "te", but the program produces its results almost instantaneously. The speed at which QTYP works is more than impressive.

Dietrich feels that QTYP is let down by the small size and limited content of its dictionaries. He has a point, particularly as his native language is German. As he reminded me in an email, German nouns have 5 declensions, verbs 20 conjugations and up to 30 prefixes, and adjectives and numerals 6 declensions. The German dictionary supplied with QTYP has under 48,000 words. Dietrich has built one of just over 120,000, but this still does not cover some common German words. He asked me what I thought would be a optimum size of a German dictionary, but I chickened out of answering that!

Fortunately other languages have better dictionaries than the German one, and I include a list of QTYP dictionaries as an appendix to this article.

People who prefer real time spellchecking probably have more problems with small dictionaries than those of us who prefer to spellcheck the completed document. This is also possible with QTYP using a program called QTYP_file. However this is only guaranteed to work with QUILL and plain text files. All it does is replace the space or punctuation mark after a mispelt word with a left arrow sign. Not a user friendly way of spell checking.

The third way you can use QTYP is customised spellchecking. For this you can use either QTYP_SPELL or QTYP. When I moved from Perfection to Text87, I thought spellchecking with QTYP would be a disappointment, but I soon discovered Text87 has a good implementation of QTYP. Basically you check the complete document and when a mispelt word is found you can choose between editing it yourself or calling up the dictionary list.

There are probably not many of us who would wish to incorporate QTYP into our own programs, but it was emails from Al Boehm that made me see new possibilities. He has written a word game program, mainly to demonstrate programming techniques, and asked if it would be possible to use QTYP to randomly select a word from its dictionary.

My first reaction was to advise against this, mainly because QTYP requires you to know the first few letters of a word. However Al came back with a practical way of doing this. A simple RND(97 to 122) command would enable you to select a letter between a and z. Do this 3 times and you have a 3 letter string. You could then use QTYP to see if there were any valid words starting with the string. It would be a simple matter to extract these words from the dictionary and choose one of them at random.

Using this technique most of the randomly generated strings would not be the start of a word, but QTYP would probably work fast enough for this not to be noticeable. An advantage of using QTYP would be the memory saving. QTYP compresses a word list of about 600K to about 120K. That is another thing I like about the software.

How easy is it to program using the QTYP extensions? It is the old QL story. The main problem is understanding the manual. The programming itself is easy. For example SPELLING-CRIB uses four QTYP commands:

`err=SPELL_OPEN (#ch,dic$)` tells QTYP the program wants to link with it. In this case err gives an error number if something goes wrong, ch is the channel to be used and dic$ the QTYP dictionary.

`err=SPELL_NEW (#ch,dic$)` clears out all existing information and allows you to load a new dictionary.

`err=SPELL_CHECK (#ch,str$)` gives QTYP the search string.

`word$=SPELL_WORDS (#ch)` extracts the words starting with str$ from the dictionary. You repeat this command until you get an empty string.

Easy, isn't it? Perhaps there is a versatility in QTYP that we have yet to fully exploit. For example, there is a possibility to add a note to a word in the QTYP dictionary. It could remind you that "practice" in UK English is a noun and "practise" a verb. Could this be used to make a simple translation dictionary, with a word in the original language and the translation as a note? I have yet to test this idea, but in the meantime it would be interesting to hear of other ideas for unusual uses of QTYP.

Appendix

As far as I can tell this is the present availability of QTYP dictionaries.

ENGLISH: QTYP comes with two English dictionaries, one has under 50,000 words and the other over 200,000. The former is universally regarded as being too small, and the latter too unreliable. I have since released a dictionary of about 64,500 words that includes place and personal names.

This is available in both UK ENGLISH and USA ENGLISH versions. The quickest way to get the UK version is to download the SPELLING-CRIB program from the Just Words! web page.

DUTCH: Two Dutch dictionaries formerly circulated in the Netherlands, a Spellchecker dictionary that I wrote and a QTYP dictionary that I suspect was written by a Belgian. Both had numerous mistakes. After the Dutch 1995 spelling revision I merged the dictionaries, checked for mistakes and revised them to conform to the new spelling rules. This dictionary has about 70,000 words.

FRENCH: The French QTYP dictionary has about 60,000 words and from two separate sources I have heard the same criticisms. There are several errors in the dictionary and verbs are only fully conjugated for the initial letters A to H. One of the critics sent me an alternative dictionary of 208,000 words, which is available from Just Words!

SPANISH: The same person sent me a Spanish QTYP dictionary of almost 175,000 words. This, with its expanded word list, has proved to be one of my most popular poundware disks. Recently I had a request for the Spanish word list from some Peruvian researchers into artificial intelligence. They had never heard of the QL, and I had to make them a special version for the Windows character set.

ITALIAN: I believe QItaly have produced Italian QTYP dictionaries, although I know nothing of the present situation. There is an Italian dictionary on disk UG20 of the QUANTA library, but I know nothing about it.

GERMAN: As I wrote in the main article, the German dictionary supplied with QTYP has under 48,000 words, although Dietrich has built a dictionary of over 120,000 words. However, those of us who have compiled dictionaries know that it is almost impossible to make a list of even 10,000 words without making a few mistakes, even if only typing errors. A good freeware German QTYP dictionary is urgently required.

Should you like to have any of these dictionaries, except Italian or German, the best way is to ask me to send them as an attachment to an email. If not, please send 4 UK first class stamps or 3 I.R.C's to cover post and packing.

I would always be pleased to hear from anyone with other word lists or dictionaries.

geoffwicks@hotmail.com
http://members.tripod.co.uk/geoffwicks/justwords.htm

2PC or not 2PC

Tony Firshman

The trip to the Canadian QL show in Montreal was more eventful than most, and even before I set out.

I found a cheap KLM flight to Montreal, which involved a short hop on a Fokker from London City to Amsterdam) - ask Roy to tell you the joke about the Lancaster rear gunner).

Now what is the baggage limit?

Letter 1 (Feb KLM) - no reply
Letter 2 (Mar KLM) - no reply
Letter 3 (Mar KLM) - no reply
Letter 4 (Apr KLM) - no reply

Call 1 (Apr KLM) (desperately) - 20kg, reverting to 50kg after my 'WHAT'!
Call 2 (KLM May 2) - 64 kg. "Why", I ask. "Because the code '2PC' means two pieces at 32kg each".
Call 3 (London City LCY - May 14) - 20kg "Why"? "Because we have a short runway and we are using small Fokkers".
Call 4 (KLM May 14) "LCY are wrong - you have 2PC".
Call 5 (LCY May 14) "KLM are wrong - we have never allowed more than 20kg. 2PC doesn't apply"
Call 6 (KLM May 15) - "You are allowed 2PC". I get this confirmed by a manager who says he will "Mark My File" at LCY.

That reassures me, but I pack very light (for me). Bike - 15kg. Rucksack 24kg.

I arrive at LCY on May 26 EARLY. I jump in first and tell the girl at the desk about the saga. No note on my file, and "we only allow 20kg". I guess I looked as if I was about to burst into tears. There was no-one in the queue and no-one near. She looked conspiratorial. "Put your luggage on the scales" 39 kg shone out. "It looks like 20kg to me", she said. "I could kiss you" I said, but there were now people near.

I then had visions of the papers the next day:

OVERLOADED FOKKER PLUNGES INTO DOCKS - superHermes LOST

The engine revved to maximum power with the brakes on. I have never experienced such vibration before takeoff. It then sprung down the runway like a greyhound. The newspapers didn't get their story, and I got to Montreal 15 minutes early. I was spending a week with Bill Cable in Vermont, USA (Wood and Wind Computing) installing a spring water system, so Francois (the show organiser) took me to the bus station, and we went on the town. Plenty of life in St Catherine and St Denis Streets, from a British pub to

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male strip club with a queue of teenaged girls. I tried to persuade him to busk a pavement show - I needed some Canadian dollars. He declined.

I caught the 23:30 bus to White River Junction - where the US show was last year. I was looking forward to the 24hr cafe Bill mentioned, at 03:45. It had closed two years ago! I set off on my Brompton folding bike down Route 5 South for Bill's, via Windsor. Windsor is about 13 miles away with the longest wooden covered bridge in the USA. Once outside White River Junction I saw no signs. It was sort of dry but there was distant rumbling. As I cycled along the flashes started and rumbling was getting nearer. The heavens then opened with a vengeance. I found a ***very*** small tree which syphoned the water right on to me. I pushed the bike (quietly) to a porch with an open lit window right alongside with TV flashing. Bear in mind this was 04:45 in the middle of nowhere. Ipondered the alternatives - having a bath, or getting shot. I kept very quiet, especially when I heard the dog.

The rain stopped as quickly as it started and I carried on still alive. Still no road signs.

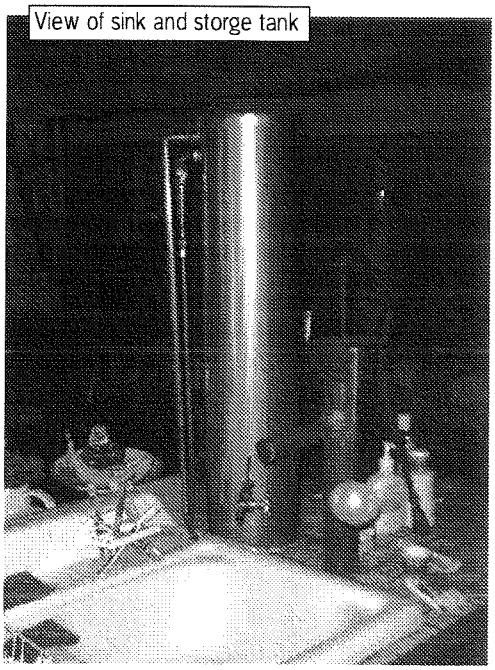
After another hour, I got to a crossroads, with no road markings or signs. I went straight on, past Hartford Elem School, and it turned into a dirt track. There I met the first car, at about 05:45 - would you stop for a bedraggled backpacked guy on a strange bicycle? Well he did. "Where is route 5?" "Ah, you got confused like every other stranger - you are on a short cut". Got back to Route 5, after seeing a wooden covered bridge that even Bill hadn't heard of, and a waterfall. Oh yes, and another shelter from a downpour, this time in an open barn full of valuable tools - more guns? Turned left as instructed, and saw my first sign "White River Junction 9", but in the direction I was going. ... I had come from WRJ!!! Carry on for a while and find this was via the freeway. I remember exactly the same problem in Italy with Stuart Honeyball when the motorway was washed away - all the signs point to motorways.

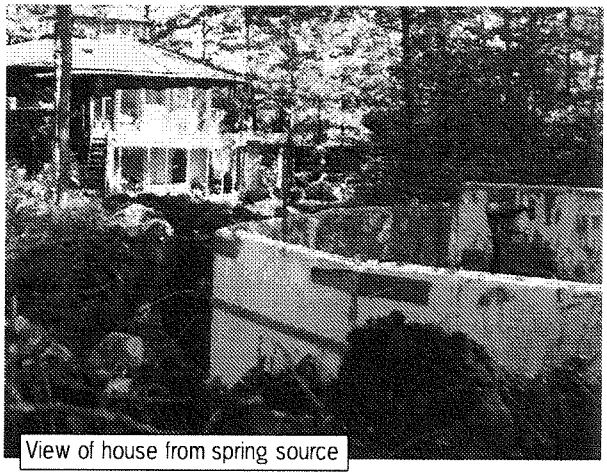
Carry on towards Windsor, and the second car of the morning is heading towards me. It is slowing down. Visions of guns again. A voice leans out of the window - "Hi Tony". Bill and Mary had been woken up by the rain, and Mary said "Bill - you have got to go get Tony".

... so I arrive at Bill's self made round house in the forest at about 7am.

First call was a bath. Bill had lit the wood burning stove in the forest, and cold water is from buckets. It was a superb welcome to be soaking along with a few larvae, with a view, on two sides, of the forest through floor to roof windows. Then breakfast and the Meriden Church choir. Mary had sung in St Peter's Berkhamsted on their visit to me earlier this year, and I was offered a return favour. Sunday May 27 was a choir holiday! Still I enjoyed singing familiar Hymn tunes with different words, and got a very special welcome from the priest. A lot of the liturgy is very like the UK - not surprising in New England.

The rest of the week was spent plumbing-in Bill's spring fed well into the house. By Thursday we had running spring water in the sink - very exciting. Much better and fresher than climbing the hill, and using water from pails. The spring runs slowly all the time from an overflow in a stainless steel tank by the sink, with a low level tap for use.


View of sink and storge tank


View of house from spring source

I was taken out to the Four Aces Diner, West Lebanon one evening. I heard of this Diner few weeks back on a TV program by Bill Bryson (US author) talking about a walk in the Vermont Forests looking for bears - his favourite US diner. They had never heard of him!

Another evening was spent in a restaurant/pub in West Leba-

non which brewed its own beer. OK the pints are small, but it was the nearest to a British pint I have every experienced outside the UK. A very nice surprise.

I enjoyed the trips to local shops getting hardware for the plumbing - it meant using Bill's 450cc motorbike. It was quite a handful going down the wet forest tracks. Bill doesn't just have the one motorbike. He has two working ones and innumerable others in various states of undress. There is one BSA, and we got parts from an East London BSA specialist (and real fish and chips) when he was in the UK. Looks like he needs a lot more BSA parts. He has two running saloons, and a lot more incomplete copies for spares. Nice to have the land. Oddly enough on returning home I found that I had been offered (and missed) a Volvo like mine with a dead engine for £80. Ah well.....

On one trip I found Vermont Salvage, WRJ that had a vast collection of house (and church) salvage. There was a British telephone box - a snip at "38" ($3800)! "We sold two last week for showers".

On Thursday evening I got my choir fix - there was a rehearsal. We arrived after a meal, and my voice was a mite lower than my usual baritone. The tenor didn't arrive, and I had to stand in. It took a good 30 minutes to warm up! There was much amusement at my British accent in the Spiritual. I was equally amused by their accents in the very British Elijah (Mendelssohn).

We travelled to Montreal on Friday with Kevin O'Leary, who lives and makes pottery in the aformentioned Meriden. I hadn't realised that Bill had introduced him to QLs. We were told to look for 'Kingston Hall' which turned out to be 'Hingston Hall' in Concordia University. Very primitive with open plan shared bathrooms, but good enough for me. Took me back almost 40 years!

One of the jobs was to get Kevin's CD rom working with his Q40 - he spent a long time messing, but could not get both HD and CD ROM drive to work together. It turned out that the jumper on the CD ROM drive marked 'single' had to be removed. A nice 5 minute job.

Marcel is to be congratulated on hacking into the school network - we had internet access all day.

Jim Hunkins announced his very impressive QDT. This looks like being a very professional product, and every bit as essential as QPAC2.

Al Boehm had what looked like hundreds of 270mb hard disks - perfect for Qubide. I only managed to bring six back.

We spent the evening having dinner on a boat - the traders had the boat fare paid for by NesQLug - much appreciated. Not possible to sing our prepared barbershop pieces - every area of the boat had deafening piped musak. It took a long time to dock, while the crew made a valiant attempt to bend the gangplank, and deposit it in the water. Apparently a winch had broken. After that we went into town looking for St Denis St. We failed, but found a pub. We started to push our way to the bar - hold on, all the people dancing are guys. Made a hasty exit, and went into a nice looking pub up the road. Guys AND gals there so OK. It had Guinness - Darren's eyes lit up, but was shocked at the way it was served. "You wouldn't get anyone drinking that at home. A 'priest's collar' we would call a head like that". After one pint he gave the barman an unwelcome lesson in pouring Guinness - "you have to wait 5 minutes" he said. "Sure" was the reply. "Are you guys gay?" he added, obviously doubting it. "Why?" .... "'cos this is a Gay pub".

Ah well - still it was an experience. As usual we left Jim Hunkins (with the car) to spend the night on the tiles, and we took a taxi back.

I returned on the Sunday after Jochen's 'shopping centre' fix, leaving Jochen, Roy and Marcel to make their fortune in Las Vegas. The airport bus cost $18. The 4pm bus was cancelled, so persuaded a nice reluctant lady to share a taxi at $14 each. There are no trains to the airport.

The return journey was mainly uneventful.

However Dorval airport terminal is not the nicest in the world. The contrast between it and Amsterdam Schipol couldn't be more dramatic. There is very little the other side of customs, I was told, so I stuck to the very small crowded main area. There was very little free of queues, but I found a distant corner, near the toilets and no seats. I joined the starting grid for free seats, and won the race to the first. I then realised I needed to spend my spare Canadian dollars. I found a US PlayStation magazine with a CD just under the $9.48 I have - Ben will be pleased. $10 plus, the till said - grrr I had forgotten the added sales tax. I find US/Canada pretty cheap for most things, but this habit of not quoting the price one pays a real con. OK - will give the $9.48 to a charity.

I pass through the customs check, to find a notice "Dorval needs rebuilding - we have imposed an extra airport tax of $10" "... but I only have $9.48 - can I pay the rest with credit

card?" "NO". "Why is this not on the ticket?" "KLM should have told you" "They didn't" I remonstrate, and the queue is obviously on my side. I then turn tramp, and beg in the queue. Someone exchanges my 5 French franc coin (how did that get in my change?) for the needed 52 cents (about 25p).

I also learnt (in Amsterdam airport) that Ben had broken his portable CD player ... which was to go with the case I had bought in Lebanon (VT). The last hassle was that Stansted Airport - Heathrow bus no longer stopped at Hunton Bridge. This forced me to wait 2 hours for the Oxford bus (via Hemel Hempstead) where I bought a new CD player.

... so the first and final misfortune brought good results.

... and I sold enough in Montreal to pay for the trip.

Getting into QPAC2 - Part 3

Roy Wood

Now that you have read through part 1 and 2 and run the file you will, I hope, have some insight into the way that QPAC 2 does its work and how to change it to work for you. The whole essence of this is that the way it works can be tailored to the way that you work and, with a little practice you can add, change and manipulate this Boot file to do whatever you may want with the computer. If you do not want a button frame then leave out the 'BT_' commands and just use the HOTKEYS. There is one command for loading programs that I have not used in this Boot file and that is 'HOT_CMD'. This is the equivalent of typing the command itself on the SuperBasic command line. you could, for instance add ERT HOT_CMD ('m','LRUN flp1_myprog_bas') to the Boot file and then pressing 'ALT/m' would run the Basic program flp1_myprog_bas. Too use this command SuperBasic must be active and not asleep (ie. there should not be a button called 'Superbasic' or 'System' (if you are using SMSQ/E) in the button frame.). Anything that can be typed in on the command line can be put into a HOT_CMD statement. There are quite a few more commands and functions to explore in QPAC 2 but you can set off on that journey once you have the basic system up and running. I have been using it for at least four years now and I still re-write my Boot file constantly and find new ways to do things.

The Full Boot File:

```
100 Tk2_ext                                  : REM We need this for LRESPR
110 MODE 4
120 WINDOW #0;512,42,0,214:BORDER #0;1,4,0
130 WINDOW #1;256,140,256,60:BORDER #1;1,255
140 WINDOW #2;256,140,0,60:BORDER #2;1,255
150 OPEN #3;'con_512x150a0x60':BORDER #3;1,255:INK #3;4:CLS #3
160 PRINT#3,"                                 "
170 PRINT#3,"    Q Branch BOOT FILE           "
180 PRINT#3,"Prepared for Our Customers       "
190 DATA_USE flp1_:PROG_USE flp1_
200 LRESPR ptr_gen
210 LRESPR wman
220 LRESPR hot_rext
230 LRESPR menu_rext
240 LRESPR flp1_QPAC2
250 :
260 REMark - Any more resident extensions?
270 REMark - Now Hotkeys to start things off
280 :
290 ERT HOT_PICK ('b','')                    :REMark pick superBasic
300 ERT HOT_THING ('1','Files';'\dFLP1_')    :REMark create a files thing for flp1_
310 ERT HOT_THING ('2','Files';'\dFLP2_')    :REMark ditto flp2_
320 ERT HOT_THING (CHR$(232),'Button_Sleep') :REMark create a 'sleep'Thing.
330 ERT HOT_THING ('.','Button_Pick')        :REMark create a Thing to pick the button frame
340 ERT HOT_LOAD1 ('x','flp1_Xchange')       :REMark load Xchange when needed
350 ERT HOT_LOAD1 ('m',flp1_menuconfig')     :REMark load menuconfig when needed.
```

```
360 ERT HOT_WAKE ('P','Pick')                :REMark call up the Pick Menu
370 ERT_HOT_WAKE ('R','Rjob')                :REMark call up the Rjob Menu
380 :
390 REMark - Set up, now go
400 :
410 REMark now we create buttons for the screen
420 :
430 BT_SLEEP 'Pick'
440 BT_SLEEP 'Exec'
450 BT_SLEEP 'Rjob'
460 BT_HOTKEY 'x','Xch'                      :REMark put Xchange on a button
470 BT_HOTKEY 'm',Menuconfig                 :REMark put menuconfig on a button
480 BT_HOTKEY '1','FLP1'                     :REMark put flp1_ on a button
490 BT_HOTKEY '2','FLP2'
500 d$=DATE$:dd$=d$( 10 TO 12)&d$(6 TO 9)&d$(1 TO 4) :REMark create a proper date string
510 HOT_DO 'b'                               :REMark Pick Button Frame
520 HOT_DO CHR$(232)                         :REMark put the system to sleep
530 ERT HOT_KEY ('^',dd$)                    :REMark put the date onto a hotkey
540 ERT HOT_KEY  ('Q',CHR$(240)&'Q'&CHR$(10)):REMark put F3/Quit onto a hotkey
550 HOT_GO                                   :REMark start the hotkey system
```

The Stuffer Buffer

The Stuffer Buffer is a very useful part of the QPAC 2 armoury. At a basic level you can call up a 'Files' menu and select a file by HITting it. You can then leave that menu and go into another program execute the command to load a file, press 'ALT/SPACE' and the previously selected file name appears. This is a useful procedure for programs like Quill which have no file selection process. There is also a new keyword, 'HOT_STUFF' which you can use in your Super-Basic programs. You can, for instance generate a string and then use the line: HOT_STUFF mystring$ in your own programs. Pressing 'ALT/SPACE' will produce that string in the same way.

Further Experimentation

Now that you have a functioning Boot file you can try some experiments with the format and commands within it.

Try removing the '1' from the 'HOT_LOAD1 ('x','flp1_XCHANGE') command and then see what happens when you press 'ALT/x' a few times.

Add the lines

```
BT_SLEEP 'Jobs'
BT_SLEEP 'Channels'
BT_SLEEP 'Button'
```

to the Boot file and see the result. The Button menu is very interesting because it gives you a menu consisting of all of the programs in the system. DO one of these names and a button with the name in it will appear on the frame. DO the button and that program with start.

Xchange.

Xchange is the Psion four, ie all of the Psion programs built into one package. This program is now Public Domain and has been extensively changed and re-written by Erling Jacobson in Denmark. I have only included the basic executable file here and the full version, which includes printer drivers, documentation and configuration files can be obtained from various BBS and PD sources. I have used this in preference to the single Psion programs because it handles the memory of the computer better. If you do want to use the single Psion programs then you should refer to the QPAC 2 manual page 36 which describes how to set up memory constraints for these and other difficult programs.

The sXd command

In the Files menus that you get from QPAC 2 there is a small item in the commands line marked sXd. this has confused many a user and, if it is mentioned in the manual, it is so buried in the text as to be easy to miss. It's function is to 'swap source and destination device' hence the acronym but it does absolutely nothing until you have a device for it to swap to. The best way to see the item functioning is to call up a files menu, choose a file from the menu and then copy it to ram1_. If you then hit the sXd symbol you will get an instant directory of ram1_. If you had copied it to ram1_test_ then you would get a directory of ram1_test_, it is as simple as that. This will work with Copy, Move, Update, and Backup. What throws most people is that they load a files menu when they first get QPAC 2 and then hit the sXd

button. Of course nothing happens. If you have not performed an action on the files then you will have no device to swap to.

Epilogue

So there you have it. Many of the things that I have mentioned in this series are in the manual but they are lost in the text and what you really want to do is to get the thing up and running. I do not intend this text to replace the manual and I would like to stress that you should read the full QPAC 2 manual and run the tutorial provided. I hope that this has been of some use in that respect and I would welcome any suggestions from users as to how I could make it even easier for them. QPAC 2 does require some input from the user because it is designed to be a flexible way of organising your system and to cope with a whole range of different programs. In this age of Windows xx most people expect to be able to go to the command line and type in 'Install'. In some ways we are going down that road with the ProWesS system that PROGS are developing at the moment but I still like to be able to arrange my screens that way I want them and not have it all done for me. I like the button frame so much that I have loads of them on my system and Staurt Honeyball of Miracle Systems thinks I should have a message come up after I boot up saying 'Warning. Too many Buttons!'

Rants

Jérôme Grimbert

This is just some rants about some of the things that have been irritating me. Well, it starts with rants and may end up differently. The last drop in my rant vase was with the Issue 1 of Volume 6 of QLToday (which is a wonderful revue, nevertheless): on page 5, about the Sprite editor for Q40 (and also for QPC2 and QXL with high colour drivers), the editor nicely indicated that the software had been updated. But the provided URL is false, since the fall of altern.org in June 2000 (yes, last year). I have since moved the site to various providers, and thanks to the suggestion of Thierry Godefroy, everybody can now bookmark forever (?) the following URL:

http://grimbert.cjb.net/

(it will redirect your browser to the current location of my site, wherever it is, was or will be). Moreover, the latest update in the sprite editor was to add the saving of sprite in binary (as requested in a previous issue of QLtoday), and this version (1.20) was distributed on the latest QLToday floppy (5 Years). So it was nice to see some news about my programs, but I would have preferred the URL to be able to work, and the version of the Sprite editor to be the right one. I suppose the news are taken from the ql-user list, to which I did post an update message a long time ago, when the sprite editor reached the version 0.99, but having it to appear in QLToday while the previous issue distributed the latest version is just strange.

I really enjoy the tutorial by Wolfgang Lenerz about programming Prowess in SBasic, it even gives me some idea for a tutorial about programming the PE in C. But I wonder if there is any Prowess driver for the QPC2 in high colour mode? If yes, where can they be retrieved from? And how should they be installed? As the first high colour system was the QXL, I can understand that there was no Prowess driver for the QXL (given the needs for a lot of memory and fast I/O, using Prowess on a QXL with the high colour drivers is not practical), but with QPC2, there is no memory problem (really, I'm running with 96 Mega), and I/O is just fine with modern CPU (ok, even on my old Pentium 180MHz). So I believe a high colour driver should be available for QPC2 and Prowess. While I'm speaking of Prowess, is there any way to reduce the 30 seconds wait that can be observed when loading Prowess at startup, because, on my Q40, all seems to be finished in may be 10 seconds, and it nevertheless take about half a minute to display the first Prowess buttons.

Next, to answer to Roy Wood in issue 1 volume 6 of QLToday, about the patch made by Richard to SMSQ/E 2.98, I must say that since I applied the patch (as published in the ql-user email list), my Q40 is working better. Previously, I had trouble loading Prowess (sometime it loads, sometime it did not dare to show any window, just keeping some jobs and memory), as well as with the Lonely Joker (same story, sometime it loads, and sometime only the LJ entry in the jobs list was there). With the patched SMSQ/E, it always works fine now!

While speaking of SMSQ/E, on QPC2 this time, I tried to PRINT 1.0E-304 and it just broke the SBasic windows... It seems there is something like a bug or two in the handling of very small numbers by SMSQ/E (well, may be also on the classical QL, but I did not test it).

There is also a strange thing on the Q40, where the smallest number one can enter is not the

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Tel. 0203 502011 Fax 0203 502012
http://www.j-m-s.com/smsq/index.htm

QPC2 Version 2

We have told you about the new features many times in advance: they are all fully functional: QPC2 is now running inside a Windows window (but, of course, full screen can be used as well). You have access to 65536 colours etc. Not to forget the DOS device. You can now read and write from and to DOS and Windows harddisks. DOS1_ = C:, DOS2 = D: and so on!

See review in this issue!

To avoid confusion: If you already own QPC2 (Version 1), then the upgrade is NOT free!. The naming is a bit confusing (we should have called it QPC3, but now it is too late, isn't it?), so here is the complete price list:

Upgrade to QPC2 Version 2 Final

From QPC1 (or just QPC - the first QPC!)	£41.90
From QPC2 Version 1 (or just QPC2)	£25.90
From QPC2 Version 2 any Pre-Release	FREE!

You can get free Updates in the JMS BBS (+49 203 502013 and 502014)
You will also find the free Update on the Internet: http://qpc.j-m-s.com

TERMS OF PAYMENT

Postage and package **[Germany]** DM 8,99 (if total value of goods is up to DM 50,- then only DM 5,99).
[Europe] £4,50 (if total value of goods is under £15 then only £3).
[Overseas] between US$7.50 (1 item) and US$17.50 (maximum).
All prices incl. 16% V.A.T. (can be deducted for orders from non-EU-countries).
Cheques in DM, EURO, Eurocheques and Credit Cards accepted.
Please note: Prices are based on an average exchange rate of £1 ranging between DM 3,10 and DM 3,20. Prices may be adjusted in case the exchange rate falls out of this range - in both directions!
We can charge your credit cards in £'s, US$, EURO or in DM - please state the currency you prefer.
Please do not send any UK bank cheques in £ - our banks have increased the fee for handling them by 600% (no joke!) so we cannot accept them

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smallest possible number: PRINT 1.0E-616 is rejected, but PRINT 1.0E-615/1.0E5 is fine (and give 1E-620). Alas, it seems there is no arithmetic underflow, because PRINT 1E-615/1E6 also gives 1E-620). It would be a good thing to fix and uniformise the SMSQ/E versions (at least, Q40 and QPC2).

And finally, about the QSSS (the sound system described in a previous issue), I download the seven zip files a long time ago (in March), but all the zip files are full of error (WinZip on PC refuse to open them, and using zip/unzip on Q40, most of the files inside the zip archives are reported as having errors). Does anybody succeed to use the QSSS? Was there any error corrected since? And last think, what is the correct URL (because, I lost it... so if the author of the QSSS could refresh my memory, it would be great).

My Wish List

Bruno Coativy

Dear Santa Qlaus,
My Wish List, for the times to come, consists of the following:

Documentation

- All the documentation which pertains to SMSQ and the QXL's version of SMSQ/E. This includes, amongst other things, the exact format of the QXL.WIN files and the internal workings of the SBASIC threaded interpreter (or incremental compiler, if you prefer...). Of course, the technical description of the PC/QXL interface would be a bonus

Software

- The 16 and (or ?) 256 (the best choice if we consider that the 16 colour mode is being pretty rare on recent graphic cards) colour drivers for the QXL. Moreover, the QXL being limited to a maximum of 8MB of RAM, it would be very desirable to exploit the power on the PC side to the best. In my setup, there are about ten times more processing power and thirty two times more memory on the PC side (this PC is completely outdated...) than on the QXL2 side... Alas, I also suppose this latter point involves a partial (complete?) rewrite of the PC/QXL interface. As a matter of fact, my dream would be to see the implementation of a PC/QXL interface as described in Thierry Godefroy's document "PCto QXL_txt" (1995) available on QLCF BBS (Area 15)
- A great improvement could stand in using the "UNREAL" mode of the PC, provided that QXLers use at least a 386 (or, better, a 486, because this generation of PC scarcelly accepts more than 16 MB of RAM and nowadays, second-hand 386 PCs are nowhere to be found anyway...). The "UNREAL" mode (which is obtained thanks to the freeware UNREAL.EXE file by Daniele Paccaloni) is a mode which permits to access the whole PC's memory (i.e. 4GB under DOS...) in FLAT mode while actually operating in REAL mode. An alternative would be to make use of RFM.EXE (Real Flat Mode) by Ken Martwick. Or maybe, WDOSX - which is, according to Michael Tippach, it's author, a free DOS extender - would do? Lastly, EMS, XMS or DPMI could be used
- The QXL is handicapped by a PC side code written in pure 8086 assembler, which is really a shame, considering the extended facilities offered by 80386+ code. At the moment, the right question is: how many people are still using a QXL with a 8088, 8086, 80188, 80186 or 80286 based PC? It would be ridiculous to stick to 8086 code if the majority of QXLers now have 32 bits powered PCs. Again, using a QXL on a more "modern" PC - as described above - would permit in its turn to use more powerful instructions and addressing modes, as well as using the entirety of the PC's memory. Such an evolution is mandatory if QXLers want to use colour drivers in a comfortable way
- Another goodie would be to get the possibility of affecting win1_ to win8_ independantly of the DOS default order of drive letter assignment (C, D, E...). This is interesting when you have created many partitions on your hard drive (seven, for example, of which six contain a QXL.WIN file) and you also have, say, a CD-ROM drive and a ZIP drive that are to be accessed under SMSQ/E. A rather rustic - but sufficient - solution would be to make use, in the code on the PC side, of a 8 entries table (i.e. 8 bytes) containing the letters (which can then be easily edited with a sector editor or whatever), in replacement of directly calculating by means of an addition the letter of the drive for the current QXL.WIN file. It would be perfect, since once one uses a configuration which suits his needs, such a configuration is then not changed daily
- And, of course, debugging SMSQ/E V2.98 for the QXL - which suffers from some teething troubles - as fully as

possible. I hasten to add that SMSQ/E V2.98 for the QXL is worth having and the new PC/QXL interface is remarkable

Hardware

Now, for a lot more wishes: what about a QXL3/QXXL?
Such a proposal may seem surprising/inappropriate, but some facts are to be considered. Firstly, here are some general considerations (please write in these columns if i am wrong or if you disagree, it will make the Editors happy...):

- Some people ask - among other things - for the implementation of proportional fonts, "background" disk/harddisk and a new screen driver with updating of burried windows. Do they realise that all these goodies need A LOT of processing power? I think so if they already use ProWesS (no offence here, Joachim...)
- Motorola are NO longer developing the 68K family (how long will these processors be sold?). Furthermore, the best chip available i.e. the 68060 is, as far as i know, quite expensive. If i remember right, a price of £250 was quoted some years ago for the 50 MHz version
- The makers of the most famous "personal assistant" in the world (sold by the million...) is about to abandon the Motorola DragonBall processor (with a CMOS 68K core similar to the one of the Gold Card) in favour of a processor from the ARM family (sorry, Arnould...)
- Motorola have recently acquired a license to produce ARM processors (see above)
- Last-minute (3rd July 2001): in the July-August issue of a French computers magazine is mentioned the fact that Motorola are about to produce a 200 MHz version of the DragonBall called "DragonBall MX1". So, it seems the above information is already outdated... The article does not state if a 200 MHz standalone 68000 is about to be marketed as well. Anyway, a big thank you to the person (Santa Qlaus?) who suggested this development...
- The VME market, which was, at the very beginning, closely related to the 68K range of processors and is always a mass market, inexorably sees the collapse of the 68K family in favour of the x86s, PowerPCs and the like
- Motorola are developing a family of processors called "ColdFire", which are meant to be "MC 68000 compatible", very powerful and cheap. In particular, - but i do not know prices - the ColdFire V4e should be available in 2001: 350 MIPS · 225 MHz (0.18μ), 510 MIPS · 333 MHz (0.13μ). Both have a MMU, a FPU, an enhanced MAC (Multiply ACcumulate operation, which seems to be heavily used in signal processing applications such as Fast Fourier Transforms) and even hardware support for multi-processing, expanded debug facilities and an in-build EDO/SDRAM interface! Just imagine a QXL with this microprocessor, a PCI bus, lots of RAM in the form of standard PC DIMMs/SIMMs (no more slave blocks) and the NET port

And now follow some personal considerations:

- QLers that have opted for the QXL emulator prefer to get the QXL's successor rather than to invest in a new machine (well, at least, i know of one that DO prefer: yours truly!)
- The QXL can use the PC's 4:3 ratio screen formats (i.e. 640x480, 800x600 and 1024x768 at the moment). I think it is a great advantage since i do not like when pictures are viewed on to a 2:1 ratio screen: they really look ugly (yes, I know, this is what a standard QL gives...)
- A card which fits directly into a PC is liable to attract PC users into our world, or even make former QL users getting back, which is not the case with other hardware solutions. Even if the Q40 (by the way, hats off, Graf Bros.!) can run Linux, I do not think it will attract PC users... Furthermore, i have read and heard that the Linux "distributions" begin to be faced with compatibility problems
- Contrary to what have been maintained so far, the PC/QXL interface is rather reliable (the one of SMSQ/E V2.91 already was). In fact, I have been back to DOS more quickly than i expected mainly when hacking around (invaluable NET port...) or when using bugged softwares. But, as far as I know, there is NO machine in the world (not only ours...) which is exempted from crashing under all circumstances. As for the speed issue, only remember people who overclocked their QXLs many years ago and please consider that the hardware interface can be improved (PCI bus, dual-ported ram...)

Well, as you have probably guessed, this is a plea for someone (hi, Nasta!) making this card, be it in mono-processing or multi-processing (what? - yes, of course I have blown my top!) mode. The latter would be GREAT and would make appear the price of the PCI chip smaller in comparison...

Conclusion

Since Santa Qlaus is very much appreciated, the deliveries wear his sledge and the reindeers are ravenous (sorry, it should read: "must be given decent food"), I for one, am prepared to invest/spend MONEY in all the above.
Provided that enough persons (I think of the QXL community in the first place, of course) are interested, it would be possible to, say, pay the development of SMSQ/E for the QXL3/QXXL platform.
A last word: should this prompt Nasta to make the QXL3/QXXL (i understand it would represent a great deal of work), I am also prepared to help paying the development of SMSQ/E for the GOLDFIRE, whilst I am not - a priory - interested in purchasing one.
All in all, and at least, this Wish List has given me the opportunity to give some material to the Editors...
Any reactions?

Happy New Year to you all! (this article was originally written on 3rd February 2001).

.... yes, and a bit early for Santa 2002 :-) Actually, we delayed this article twice and I can't tell why. Maybe the editors are just overworked. Sorry, Bruno - but there's still plenty of time for next XMas.

QPC2v2 - with the new graphic drivers!

Norman Dunbar

Some time ago, there was much talk on the QL mailing list about the new graphics drivers. At first I didn't pay much attention - who needs more than 8 colours anyway? Then Marcel Kilgus released the latest version of QPC2 entitled QPC2v2 and with it came version 2.98 of SMSQ and the much talked about GD2 system - the new graphics drivers.

Suffice to say, the GD2 system is a break from QL tradition, with many more colours available to QL programs. When I first started it up, something was 'wrong' with the screen - but I couldn't quite put my finger on it - then I noticed that some of my Pointer Enabled programs had nice blue icons on a mode 4 screen!
There are more facilities at hand in the latest version of QPC2, for instance, under Windows, the program can be configured to run 'in a window' or full screen. You can of course switch between the two with judicious use of the CTRL + SHIFT + F12 keys to toggle between modes as and when you wish.
On startup there are a number of screen resolutions offered - pick whichever suits your needs, but if the one you want isn't there, simply type the sizes into the correct boxes and it might be allowed. I tried 480 by 320 (just for fun) but it rejected my choice telling me that I had to have a resolution of at least 512 in the 'x' direction. It appears that the resolution settings relate to QL pixels and not Windows ones.
Not to worry, as I can use the DISP_COLOUR command when QPC2 is running to set the size I want. Simply type

```
DISP_COLOUR ,480,320
```

and it will be set to the size I want - or so I thought. QPC2 quietly rounds the sizes up to the minimum allowed and sets the window size to that. Note the comma before the 480, by the way, that 'missing' first parameter specifies the colour depth and can be zero for QL colours or 3 for 16 bit - 65536 colours. There are other setting of 1, 2 and 4 for 4 bit (16 colours), 2 for 8 bit (256 colours) and 4 for 24 bit (16 million + colours) but the documentation says that these don't exist.
There are other parameters to set the monitor framerate etc but these are documented as doing nothing on most machines, and it is best to not adjust these settings as PC monitors can be overdriven which causes them to go 'phut' and stop working - unless they are very expensive and prevent you from doing it.
One other problem with changing color depth, which is documented, is the fact the the Pointer Environment doesn't restore the screen very well if a program is switched into after a colour depth change.
The GD2 drivers now allow your 'QL' to have any number of colours from the good old fashioned 4 or 8 colours, 256 colours or 24 bit which offers well over 16 million different colours. If this wasn't enough, you can set the program to run in 4 colour mode, but redefine the colours to be something totally different - as in the following example. Note that the colours have to be defined in 'true colour' mode which is a 32 bit long word made up of 8 bits of zero, 8 bits for red, 8 bits for green, 8 bits blue , so red is $00ff0000 in hex, green is $0000ff00 and blue is $0000ff. Mixing the colours up in varying amounts gives different colours.

In the documentation that comes with your upgrade, section 3.1 describes the format as RGB0 (8 bits red, green, blue and zero) which doesn't match the examples given. The real format is as described above - 0RGB with 8 bits for each.

By the way, the documentation also advises against redefining colour zero - but doesn't give any reasons!

```
1000 Crimson = $ff0064  : REMark RGB
1005 SeaGreen = $00ff9B : REMark RGB
1010 White = Crimson + SeaGreen :
     REMark $ffffff
1015 PALETTE_QL  0,0,0,Crimson, Crimson,
     SeaGreen, SeaGreen, White, White
```

This gives us the correct mode 4 colours, even though we are running in high colour mode. There is an explanation in the documentation as to why this may be required - and as I mentioned earlier, this resets my blue icons back to the correct colours when running under the Pointer Environment and High Colour mode. Mind you, I happen to like the new style blue icons, so I don't bother to redefine the 'correct' mode 4 colours on my system.

Of course, there is nothing to stop you setting a completely different set of colours to the 'standard' 4 - or 8:

```
1000 ivory = $FFFFF0
1010 purple = $800080
1020 sea_sick = $CCFF66
1030 duck_egg = $00FFCC
1040 black = 0
1050 blue = $0000FF
1060 red = $FF0000
1070 green = $00FF00
1080 :
1090 PALETTE_QL 0,black, red,blue,green,
     duck_egg,sea_sick, purple,ivory
1100 CLS
1110 FOR x = 0 TO 19
1120   STRIP x MOD 8
1130   PRINT to 50 : print
1140 END FOR x
```

In the above example, the 'normal' QL 8 colours have been amended to completely different ones, and when this runs in mode 4, there are 8 colours!!

A quick word about palettes

The new drivers have the ability to display numerous colours, while the old QL could display

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4 or 8 according to the mode. This means that some of the new colours need to be 'mapped' to the old ones in order to allow old style programs to run correctly.
Remember that even in QL mode, 4 you can safely run the command 'PAPER 255' and get one of the stippled colours, for example. This means that some of the stippled colours which are a mix of white and some other colour, will show up as white in a normal QL, but something different under the new drivers - because there are so many colours.
Like an artist, a palette is used to hold a selection of colours from all those available. At startup, QPC2 maps its palette to show the old style QL colours - so red shows as red etc. Because this mapping doesn't quite work for some programs that show colours outside the range 0 to 7, the choice of mappings can be changed - as shown above.

Wallpaper

A subject so beloved of those poor souls who spend all their life using Windows - much time is wasted setting desktop colours and wallpaper images to try to make their working life a wee bit more bearable. Well, now we too can while away the hours setting background colours and wallpaper using the BGCOLOUR_xx and BGIMAGE procedures.
BGCOLOUR_QL takes a QL colour code and sets the colour of the QPC2 window to that colour, so BGCOLOUR_QL 255 sets a stippled black/white colour (grey) on my system.
BGCOLOUR_24 255 sets a true colour in the format 0RGB, which sets a very nice shade of blue. These commands do not affect the colours of any opened QL windows nor any windows yet to be opened - they simply change the desktop colour for QPC. (Desktop being the bit that all the other windows are opened upon - if you like.)
BGIMAGE takes a filename as a parameter. This must be a plain SBYTES image for the screen and sets the desktop to show that image.

The new DOS_ device driver

Another new feature in QPC2 is the DOS_ device driver. This allows you to save and load QL programs and or files from the native PC filing system. Device DOS1_ is really C:\, DOS2_ is your D drive and so on up to DOS8_ which is your J drive.
One caveat of the DOS driver is that filenames will get truncated to the QL's 36 byte limit - even though DOS allows much longer names. The 36 characters are those after the device name, DOSn_, of course.

```
SAVE DOS1_test.bas
```
will save the current file in the root of your C drive as 'test.bas'.

```
LOAD DOS2_QDOS_BASIC_test.bas
```
will load the file test.bas from one of three places:
d:\qdos_basic_test.bas or
d:\qdos_basic\test.bas or
d:\qdos\basic\test.bas
it all depends on whether you have the directory structures set up on the DOS drive or not.

I find this device to be extremely useful - more useful to me that the new colour driver in fact! When I'm working on QLTdis or the assembler tutorials, I only have Windows at work and QPC2 and windows at home. I save my work to a DOS folder at work, and when I get home I simply load it from there into QPC2 using the DOS_ device. If I update it at home, I save back to the DOS folder and then reload it when I get back to work. Simple, effective and very useful indeed.
There is another caveat with the DOS device. Opening channels to the directory of a DOS device will fail if the name given is a filename which exists. Under QDOSMSQ this doesn't fail but works its way back up the filename until it opens a device which is a directory. DJToolkit, for example, has the DJ_OPEN_DIR extension, a few tests with that shows the following:
`DJ_OPEN_DIR('ram1_test_bin')`
actually opens the directory of RAM1_ whether test_bin exists as a file on ram1_ or not.
`DJ_OPEN_BIN('dos2_qltdis_diss_asm')`
fails -7 NOT FOUND if the file exists as a file, not as a directory. If the file doesn't exist, it still fails with error - 7. The name passed must exist and must be a directory on the device.
This then throws up another problem: EOF doesn't seem to work correctly on channels to DOS devices whether opened as directories or normal files - it always returns true even when the file has just been opened, as in:

```
1000 x = DJ_OPEN_IN('dos2_qltdis_diss_asm')
1010 IF x < 0 THEN Process_Error: STOP
1015 REPeat Loop
1020   IF EOF(#x) THEN EXIT Loop
1025   input #x,a$
1030   Do_Something a$
1035 END REPeat Loop
1040 CLOSE #x
```

The above code always shows an end of file on the directory channel, and so Do_Something is never called.

Documentation provided

My update from QBranch came with a few sheets of A4 describing the new graphics drivers, colour modes etc both in S*Basic and Assembler formats. There are a couple of example programs for you to type in showing the new colours.
Another few sheets show the new features in SMSQ 2.98 and reiterates the details about the new colour drivers.

Summary

The above may give you an idea of what is included in the new version of QPC2 and help you to decide if it is worth upgrading or not. Personally I think the DOS device driver is a lot more useful to me than the colour stuff - your thoughts may well be different.
All in all, I give it 10/10 - regardless of the bugs outlined above because I know Marcel will be on the case as soon as he can to fix them. I highly recommend upgrading - contact QBranch or Jochen Merz for details. One main reason for upgrading is the fact that many authors will already have done so, and their new programs will no doubt be making good use of the new features.

Finally

If you wish to experiment with the colour options available using the new GD2 drivers, download a copy of Wolfgang Lenerz's col_obj program and have a play with it.

The North American QL Show In Montreal

by Al and Dorothy Boehm

As usual we started a day late and a dollar short. There were so many last minute things to do plus my trip money had been raided for various essentials. What to do? Drive through the night! So I had an extra day to complete everything and would not have to pay for a motel the first night. Dorothy and I started in Alabama at 11 PM and drove until 4 PM the next afternoon to arrive at Dorothy's Sister's house in Pennsylvania. The next day's travel took us to our Daughter Liz's home near Boston. Then the next day there was only a six hour drive to Montreal.
For the first time, we were stopped at the Canadian border. I think it was because we had Liz and our new grandchild but no papa - Ian had to work and would meet us there Friday night. After some checks, we were found not guilty of child-napping and allowed to pass.

The directions, which I had wrote from maps and telephone conversations, turned out to be amazingly accurate, and we arrived at Concordia University without any false turns. There we met Inge and Deitrich Buder and had supper with them. The next morning I fetched Joe Lapunzia and his grandson John from the airport. And we made a trial run down to the old port where we would catch the dinner cruise. We ambled around checking the tourist lures. We did visit the Notre Dame Basilica. The building is worth an architectural and artistic view but in addition, I have found The Holy Sacrament Chapel to be one of the holiest places on earth.

Dietrich and Francois (r), the show organiser

Friday night, most of us had arrived and met in the parking lot to go to the Antico Martini Italian Restaurant It was a snafu since no one could remember the name or location of the restaurant. We milled around in the parking lot while I tried to boot up my PC laptop which takes forever. However we were saved by Francois Lanciault, the local show host, who did not see us at the restaurant so came to the rescue. All turned out well since the food was good and the QL chatter invigorating.
Afterwards, a group of us including Tony Firshman, Darren Branagh, Liz and Ian Podraza and myself sang barbershop style songs in the dormitory lounge. Tony hoped to whip us up to a level that we could perform on the dinner cruise. There are some very good voices in that group, but suffice it to say we needed

another practice or two before we could go on the road.

The Concordia University dormitories fell a little short of the amenities of a four star hotel. The bathrooms were down the hall, and every time you went in, the hand dryer located next to the door turned on to announce your entry. And what good can I say about a college dorm snack kitchen? But they were fine for a night or two, the price was right, and they actually brought back fond memories of olden days. The dormitory door is locked after 10 PM. Actually I think it is locked before then, but a board is placed in the doorway to keep it open! In any case, I made special arrangements for Jochen Merz and Marcel Kilgus who were arriving late to get in after 10 PM.

The show itself was held in the Loyola High School library which contained aside from books about two dozen computers all tied to the internet. Plus downstairs in the basement there was a robotics lab. It was a really nice place to have a computer meeting. Thanks Francois. Also thanks to Kevin O'Leary who printed name tags and collected money for the boat trip and breakfasts.

TF Services, J-M-S, Q-Celt, and Qbranch displayed their goodies, presented advice, and gave an occasional twist of the screwdriver to wayward devices. Al Boehm advertised George Morris' Bible Study Helps and The American version of the SBasic/SuperBasic Manual. Al, by arrangement with Rich Mellor, copies the original manual on to 8.5 by 11 inch size pages for distribution in America only. Also Al offered hard drives 2 for $4. These are 300 - 400 Mbyte drives that had been replaced when a company upgraded to gigabyte drives. If any QLer wants two or two dozen, they are yours for the price of postage. These drives were thoughtfully saved by Bill McKelvey when the company was about to throw them in the trash bin.

Once the ladies ascertained that we at the meeting could carry on unsupervised, they - Dorothy, Inge, Ann Schaaf, Mary Boyle-Cable, and Liz with her new baby Colin plus the kids: Rigel Cable and John (Joe LaPunzina's grandson) - were driven by Ian to downtown Montreal. Inge, Ann, Mary, and Dorothy went shopping in the underground mall several stories high (low?). Liz, Ian, baby Colin, Rigel, and John went to the Imax Theater to interact in a movie in which they blasted bacteria invading the body. John did so well he won free tickets which he presented to Francois for his sick son Yan. (Good show John!) After the movie they pedeled a four wheel bicycle around the park next to the St. Lawrence Seaway. Everyone had a good day learning more about Montreal.

Darren (Q-Celt Software)

Back at the show I (Al) was having a high time buying things such as a robotic unit from TF Services. I plan to play with it until my grandson's Matt's Birthday in September then give it to him for his QL. Of course, if I like it too much, Matt may have to wait until Christmas or later. I intended to demo MIDIPlayer 3 at the show. This version has a juke box capability of cycling through a list of titles. Plus I finally corrected some of my spelling errors which Simon Goodwin has been after me about. But there was trouble with my Qubide card and Roy Wood took it back with him to see if it could be repaired. This problem also short circuited my plan to work with Herb Schaaf to provide MIDI music based on his higher dimensional mathematical animations.

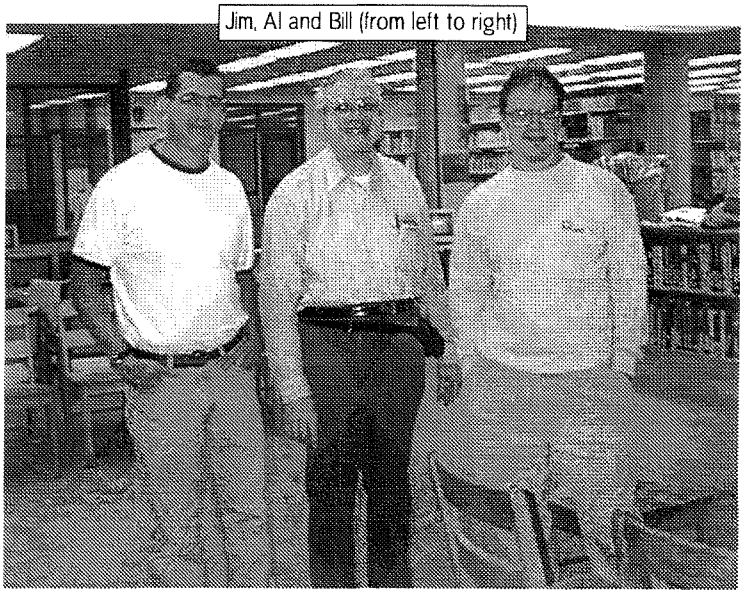
The most exciting part of the show was when Jim Hunkins unveiled the QL Desktop (QDT). This is a frontend that has some of the nicer features of the Macintosh or Windows Desktops while trying to avoid some of their obvious limitations. Jim used a large screen video display to illustrate various capabilities. Also Jim asked for and got a lot of feedback on what is needed, ways to do it, and potential problems. Quite a bit has been already programmed such as the icon editor. A lot of people will find the QDT very useful. Much more can and should be said about QDT, but I expect a comprehensive description will be presented elsewhere

Bill Cable represented Quanta and diplomatically queried attendees to see if they wanted to join or renew.

All told, there were 21 attendees at the show plus at least two curious people who looked in to see what was going on. Mysteriously there were two men who showed up several days earlier and asked if this was where the QL show was

going to be. The school principal had forgotten about the arrangement and told them no show here. I wonder who they were?

After the show, most of us went on the river boat Calvalier Maxim for a dinner and dance while cruising down the St. Lawrence River. For the entree. I had a good size lobster. The table service was OK; indeed one might say it was amazingly good considering the boisterous nature of the crowd. There was a large number of young people celebrating their graduation. But I refuse to let anyone out boister me. When it came time to dance on the open deck with the fireworks overhead, Dorothy and I were boogying with the most hyper of them.


Jim, Al and Bill (from left to right)

After the boat ride, a group of our vendors went to check out the Montreal night life. The went into one bar, but when more than one of the male customers looked at Tony's beard like it was cute, they decided to beat a tactical retreat. No go. The next bar they went into they ran into the same situation, and the third one too. Oh well, they did see an unique part of Montreal's night life.

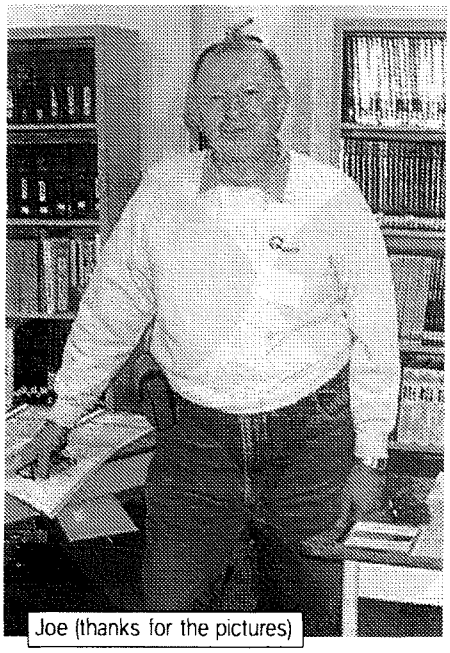
On Sunday moring we had coffee, juice, pasties, and fruit in the student lounge. NESQLUG with everyone invited, held a meeting on what could NESQLUG do for the QL. It was pointed out that we had sponsored Simon Goodwin in the development of the MIDI keywords and presented a prize for the development of TCP/IP. We think this type of compensation is effective at this time since many QL developers can not expect to obtain large earnings from sales, but understandingly they are not willing to work long hours for nothing. The question was then raised, "What do we want developed?" I think it was too early on a Sunday morning since no definitive answers were put forth, or perhaps I had boogied too much the night before and just don't remember any answers. The topic will be on our July Virtual Meeting (VM) agenda.

The status of the NESQLUG Virtual Meetings was reviewed. The first VM in January had little discussion and only a few voters. However, $50 was approved for the show. The second meeting slated for March was delayed to April since two of the officers were in away in Europe. It turned out to match the New England town meetings in hot discussion and varied ideas. One officer threatened to quit. The ballot came back with so many write-in suggestions that no item, except one, passed or failed! No lack of interest here. All but the one item were tabled for the July VM which should prove interesting. The one item that passed was that overseas members need not pay any money to belong to NESQLUG. Instead, they must contribute one article per year.

NESQLUG-NET our web site with many links to individual member's sub-sites, is slowly coming together. It is located: www.geocities.com/nesqlug1/ The 1 at the end of nesqlug is because a certain web master, no names mentioned, forgot the pass word to the original URL..

Possible sites for next year's show were discussed. Although Florida and California were mentioned, the consensus was for Washington, D.C. Since Ruth Fegley did not come to the meeting, she is nominated for local host.

After the NESQLUG meeting, we all went our separate ways to continue touring or to drive back home. Four of us did wangle our way into the St. Ignatius choir (adjacent to Concordia University) and sang and played. Herb and Ann Schaaf who came to listen said it sounded pretty good.


Joe (thanks for the pictures)

Playing with your QDT - The NA QL Show in Montreal

Darren Branagh

I have been hijacked into doing this review of what was an excellent and enlightening show in a great location - the French Canadian city of Montreal. Problem is, Where do I start!

At the beginning is always best I suppose. I arrived on the Friday night prior to the Saturday 2nd June show, and hitched a ride to a nearby Italian restaurant with Francois Lanciault who had very graciously agreed to meet me and drive me to the meal location - Thanks again Francois. When I arrived at the restaurant, everyone had finished their meal (not to worry, I'd eaten on the plane) and were talking about all things QL - Al Boehm and his wife were there, with Bill Cable and his wife and Son with Tony Firshman in tow (Tony had arrived a week earlier and stayed with Bill at his home in Vermont) Not to mention Kevin O'Leary, and Dietrich Buder from Germany, and Joe La Punzina from New York.

We all sat and chatted for an hour or so after the meal and caught up on things, and I met a few of the new faces for the first time. Some jokes flowed from our American Cousins, and I, being Irish, was the butt of many of them!!

As it got dark, we decided to return to our beds in anticipation of the show the following morning. Al Boehm and his family along with Tony Firshman had a plot in hand to try some Barber shop quartet singing back at the university campus where we were staying, so I came along and joined in - never tried it before, but had a great time trying! Al brought his guitar and we gave a few Creedance Clearwater Revival tunes a go too - great fun.

The following morning came soon enough (especially as I had been up for about 30 hours straight) and we met for a brief breakfast in the music room were we had a great time the night before. Herb Schaaf and his wife came down for breakfast, (who incidentally demoed a new program at the show - a great superbasic version of the game "the Wall" by Wolfgang Lenerz, with definable block sizes - a very nice program) as did all the others from the night before. By this time, Jochen Merz, Marcel Kilgus, Roy Wood, and Jim Hunkins had arrived by car from New York (not sure if they arrived that morning or the night before) and joined us too before driving just across the street to the Loyola High school library where the show was to be held.

The Library was upstairs in the school, so we used the lift to transport our flight cases up there. The library was large and spacious, and proved a good venue for a show, despite the rather poor turnout on the day. A lot of faces were sadly missing, and some couldn't make it for reasons beyond their control, such as visa restrictions. For many, it was a little too far North to travel, although I enjoyed the location enormously.

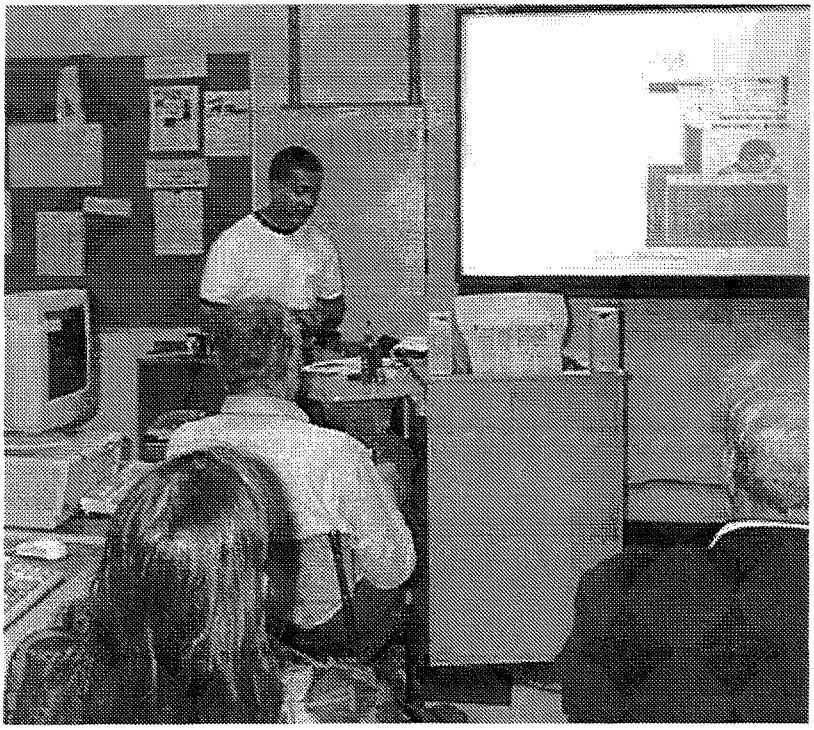
However, it proved a very busy show. Francois Lanciault demonstrated his excellent Paragraph word processor program that runs under ProWesS, as thanks to the abundance of PC's with free internet access in the library for student use, Bill Cable's Son gave us a demonstration of his Webmaster skills - he upkeeps and maintains the NESQLUG website in his spare time, and gave us a demonstration of the Web site and its features.

Tony was the first trader spotted on entering the room, and had his usual collection of QL hardware. He even had his QL controlled Lego robot present - quite how he fitted all this into a small rucksack is beyond me! Kevin O'Leary had a problem with his Q40 and a CD-ROM drive, which I think Tony was able to overcome.

Next to Tony was JMS and Jochen Merz. He had his usual vast collection of Pointer Software, and the new edition of QL Today was released, with its bright green cover and was busy renewing subscribtions . Jochen had bought a new Laptop to remedy the major problems he had with the old one (ask him to tell that story sometime!) He had several updates available to many of his programs, and as usual was kept busy most of the day.

Roy Wood and Q-Branch were next to me, and I spent the day listening to Roy's Album, Roy Weards Last Post - were Roy does the singing - great stuff. Even Marcel liked it, which is saying something - see Roy's website for more details! Roy had also rewritten the familiar monitor screen layout of the QL (red, white and black) to something completely different using the new high colour drivers! I heard Roy say it had been described as "an explosion in a play-doh factory" and judging by the bright floures-

cent colours Roy used on his screen they weren't far off.
I also spent some time listening to some local radio stations on my Sinclair Radio I had brought along - the Sinclair X1 FM scan Radio. This attracted a bit of interest from our American QL'ers as many were unaware of its existence - they are still being sold on the Sinclair Research website.
Just before Lunch, Francois Lanciault brought us down to the basement to show us a robot he had helped build, as part of a "Robot Wars" type of competion sponsored by various computer companies. It was a large device, radio controlled, which had to be capable of several tasks, such as climbing over small wooden bollards and carrying objects - very clever design, with a rotating wheel system for climbing, and a fork lift type assembly for carrying things. Quite impressive. Not QL controlled though! At lunchtime, we all adjourned to a nearby Greek Restaurant for a bite to eat and more chat.



When we got back from lunch, we were treated to the highlight of the show. It was a fantastic presentation given by Jim Hunkins on his new program, called QDT (QL Desktop). This was touched on in the last issue of QL Today, but for those that missed it, QDT is a desktop for the QL - similar to the desktop on Windows machines and X-Windows under Linux.
Using the state of the art facilities available to us in the high school computer lab, Jim connected his laptop to a nice SVGA overhead projector, and gave us a presentation of the features and goals of QDT, and the hardware needed to run it on, which, surprisingly, wasn't that advanced - which means it should be useable by the vast majority of QL users. SMSQ/E is needed though. The discussion that flowed between us all was very beneficial and I think Jim gleaned a lot of useful pointers on things to implement in the finished version - He gave us a demo of the icon designer he has written, which allows you to create your own icons to launch a file with, all in high colour, and to assign them how you wish. One feature I liked and welcomed to the QL world was dragging and dropping of Icons, and a waste bin icon for deleting files - all are hoped to be implemented. He even hopes to look at a configurable Printer driver Manager for all applications to use, so you don't have to load different drivers for different programs. The screen shots look stunning, and I can't wait for my beta copy to test it (although after the hard time I gave Jim at Picasso's Restaurant the following day, be may not send me one!! I can't let you all in on the joke as it can't really be printed in a magazine, but suffice to say it reduced Jochen and Marcel to tears of laughter on several occasions over the weekend!) Another good one was the look on Marcels face when I ordered Snails as a starter at the restaurant!!
Jim suggested a time frame of end of this year for release, with beta copies going out a month or two before then. Jim is eager to hear from anyone who would be interested in doing some beta testing on the product.
Before we all knew it, it was after 5pm and we had to clear up as we had to be at the cruise ship for 6.30pm. This was a truly excellent experience - a large boat turned restaurant, which served excellent food while cruising the river and allowing us to see most of the sights of Montreal - great fun. It took about 3 hours out and back, which was just enough for Dinner and a few glasses of wine, not to mention some great photographs. A little expensive, but a very good meal and a very different experience from the norm - worth every penny.

After the cruise, many people headed for bed, but not me.

The Montreal four (no, not a type of car or a gang of jailed convicts, but a mob of QL'ers) consisting of Tony, Roy, Jim Hunkins and Myself ended up in one of the many downtown Bars until about 2am T his was after I spent most of the night trying to teach the bartender how to pull a pint of Guinness properly. He just wouldn't listen!! The following day was spent sightseeing and driving around Montreal, taking in the Biosphere from the outside only (a large globe containing 4 separate climates inside, with everything from polar bears in one bit to rain forest in the other!) and the Olympic stadium, and some of the beautiful suspension bridges around the city. We said goodbye to Tony who had a flight to catch at 5.30pm, while the rest of us went for Dinner and adjourned to the TV Room of the university campus for some QL'ing and a Movie before bed, as the boys had to be up early to drive back to New York for a flight to Las Vegas for the second leg of their holidays. I then went onwards to Niagra Falls on my own, which was breathtaking (Jochen advised me to do this, and he was right!) and even caught the first days practice of the Montreal F1 Grand Prix on the way back - excellent fun.

So there you have it, a really great show and a great holiday location, even if as I said the attendance could have been better. Suggestions flowed before we left as to where to load the next one, and it was generally agreed to be in the USA again, to attract more attendees. As ever, the entire experience was well worth it and the show provided a few surprises and I learned a little more I hadn't known the day before - which is what QL shows are all about, aren't they?

QD filter/printer driver

Duncan Neithercut

Following the invitation in QL Today here is the QD driver that I like to use. I use QD for SBASIC and C programming mainly. I like each page of a printed program listing to have the page number plus the name of the file and the date and time it was printed to make it easy to know which version of a program I am reading. Secondly I also like the facility in M$ Word that allows for printing alternate pages. Finally I wrote on and off during the past few years a pointer driven program to create and edit printer initialisation strings containing Epson ESCP2 codes to set up font, character size, page length, margins, ink colour etc. My current printer is an Epson Stylus Photo 750.

With the facility to easily create and modify printer initialisation strings and as a result of the above objectives I have modified the example printer driver supplied by QD almost out of recognition.

Lines 1070 to 1130 find the correct location and file name for the current printer initialisation string. These files are stored on my hard drive in a subdirectory called Win1_TOOLS_PRINT_. These initialisation files have a suffix of _ini. The name of the correct file to open is held in a SMSQ/E History device into which it was placed by my boot file. The name in this device can be changed as desired by an other program iconised in my button frame. At the same time as the name of the initialisation file is constructed the epson reset codes are sent to the printer.

Next before any printing starts the printer initialisation file is interrogated in lines 1150 to 1350 to find the position of the right and left margins and the number of lines to a page. This information is needed to calulate the maximum width allowed for a footer that contains the page number, file name and date and time.

Following this the QD output stream is examined for the file name which is preceeded by "f" and the end of the name is marked by the code 2.

Once the program has this information the footer to be printed on each page is created. After this lines 1430 to 1630 contain the main loop that sends the text to the printer.

This loop also intercepts any print codes sent with the text. It will either ignore the print codes as the printer has already been setup with an initialisation string or use them in a modified way. For example if a form feed is sent the program ensures that the footer is printed before the sheet is fed out of the printer.

Reinterpreting the codes sent also creates the possibility of choosing to have alternate pages printed using the codes QD sends to the driver to select Pica Elite or Condensed printing. These are reinterpreted by the program to print all pages sequentially (Pica) or to only print even numbered pages (Elite) or odd numbered pages (Condensed). The default for the program is to print all pages sequentially. To achieve alternate page printing the QD print menu is opened either from the Files menu Print option or the tool bar printer icon. Once in the menu select either Elite or Condensed and then OK to start printing. And that is all there is to it.

```
1000 REMark My filter (printer driver)
1010 REMark for QD
1020 REMark April 2001 v0.3
1030 REMark All bytes come in via #0
1040 REMark and should be sent to #1
1050 JOB_NAME 'Print Driver'
1060 :
1070 location$="Win1_TOOLS_PRINT_"
1080 postfix$="_ini"
1090 reset$=CHR$(27)&"@"
1100 PRINT#1,reset$;:REMark reset the printer
1110 errt=FOPEN(#2,"HISTORY_PrtCodes")
1120 INPUT#2,prtdata$:CLOSE#2
1130 f$=location$&prtdata$&postfix$
1140 :
1150 errt=FOP_IN(#2,f$)
1160 REPeat IsLines
1170   IF EOF(#2):EXIT IsLines
1180   BGET#2,a:BPUT#1,a;
1190   IF a=27
1200     BGET#2,a:BPUT#1,a;
1210     SELect ON a
1220      =67
1230         BGET#2,a:BPUT#1,a;
1240         IF a›0:maxlines=a-5
1250      =81
1260         BGET#2,a:BPUT#1,a;
1270         IF a›0:rightmargin=a
1280      =108
1290         BGET#2,a:BPUT#1,a;
1300         IF a›0:leftmargin=a
1310       END SELect
1320   END IF
1330 END REPeat IsLines
1340 CLOSE#2
1350 :
1360 REMark Get file name
1370 REPeat NameLoop
1380 BGET#0,a:IF a=CODE('f'):GetName:EXIT NameLoop
1390 END REPeat NameLoop
1400 DoSetUp
1410 :
1420 lno=2 :pgno=1 :posn=1:odd=1
1430 REPeat loop
1440  IF EOF(#0):TidyUp: REMark That's it
1450  BGET#0,c          : REMark Fetch char
1460  SELect ON c
1470   =1:PurgeQDcodes : REMark warp/ignore QDs own codes
1480   =12: TidyUp     : REMark its a form feed
1490   =REMAINDER      : REMark Write char
1500     SELect ON PageOrder
1510       =0 :BPUT#1,c
1520       =1 : IF odd :BPUT#1,c
1530       =2 : IF NOT(odd) :BPUT#1,c
1540     END SELect
1550     posn=posn+1
1560     IF posn›maxchars
1570        lno=lno+1
1580        posn=2
1590     END IF
1600     IF c=10:lno=lno+1:posn=1
1610     IF lno=maxlines:DoFooter:lno=1
1620  END SELect
```

```
1630 END REPeat loop
1640 :
1650 DEFine PROCedure DoFooter
1660 IF PageOrder>0:ft=0:ELSE :ft=1:END IF
1670 SELect ON PageOrder
1680   =1:IF odd:ft=1
1690   =2:IF NOT(odd):ft=1
1700 END SELect
1710 IF ft
1720   PRINT#1:PRINT#1
1730   PRINT#1,sep$
1740   PRINT#1,footer$&pgno
1750   PRINT#1,CHR$(12);
1760 END IF
1770 pgno=pgno+1
1780 odd=pgno MOD 2
1790 END DEFine DoFooter
1800 :
1810 DEFine PROCedure DoSetUp
1820 PageOrder=0
1830 maxchars=rightmargin-leftmargin
1840 sep$=FILL$("-",maxchars)
1850 page$="Page "
1860 weekday$=DAY$
1870 text$=DATE$:time$=text$(13 TO 17)
1880 Calendar$=weekday$&" "&time$&" "&text$(6 TO 12)&text$(1 TO 4)
1890 namelen=LEN(name$):datelen=LEN(Calendar$):pagelen=6
1900 space=(maxchars-(pagelen+datelen+namelen)-1) DIV 2
1910 footer$=name$&FILL$(" ",space)&Calendar$&FILL$(" ",space)&page$
1920 END DEFine DoSetUp
1930 :
1940 DEFine PROCedure TidyUp
1950 IF PageOrder>0:ft=0:ELSE :ft=1:END IF
1960 SELect ON PageOrder
1970   =1:IF odd:ft=1
1980   =2:IF NOT(odd):ft=1
1990 END SELect
2000 IF ft=1
2010   FOR i=lno TO maxlines-1:PRINT#1
2020   DoFooter:QUIT
2030 END IF
2050 END DEFine TidyUp
2060 :
2070 DEFine PROCedure PurgeQDcodes
2080  REMark Now search for end of code
2090  REPeat eoce
2100   BGET#0,c
2110    IF c=CODE('P'):PageOrder=0
2120    IF c=CODE('C'):PageOrder=1
2130    IF c=CODE('E'):PageOrder=2
2140   IF c=2:EXIT eoce
2150  END REPeat
2160 END DEFine PurgeQDcodes
2170 :
2180 DEFine PROCedure GetName
2190 name$=""
2200 REPeat NameIt
2210 BGET#0,c
2220 IF c=2:EXIT NameIt
2230 name$=name$&CHR$(c)
2240 END REPeat NameIt
2250 END DEFine GetName
```

RWAP SOFTWARE

QL Cash Trader v3.7 £5

A well established accounts package for the small to medium sized business, including automatic generation of profit & loss account, balance sheet, VAT returns, reports and analysis for audit trails and management decisions. Previously sold for over £100.*

QL Payroll v3.5 £5

Manage a payroll for a small to medium sized business. Handles up to 99 employees easily, producing P45s and P60s as well as the payslips on a monthly or weekly basis. Calculates tax and national insurance and is easy to update to take account of the current tax year rules.

Q-Help v1.05 £10
Q-Index v1.04 £5

Q-Help: on-screen help for SuperBASIC commands, including TK2, Turbo Toolkit, SMSQ/E and PD toolkits. Can be used to add help to your own programs - simply produce ASCII text for each help page, add an index and Q-Help automatically cross-references and displays the links.
The PD toolkits referred to are available for £2.
Q-Index: The SuperBASIC index supplied with the Reference Manual - enter a topic such as 'screen resolution' and find out the commands which relate. Launch Q-Help for further info on the chosen command.

Sidewriter v1.08 £10

Produce landscape printouts of Easel/Qspread spreadsheets and output from QL Genealogist, as well as any other standard text file. You can specify the fonts to be used on the page. Works with all EPSON compatible printers, from 9 pin dot matrix to laser printers. A most useful utility by Dilwyn Jones - you know it must be easy to use.

ProForma ESC P2 Drivers v1.03 £8

New improved colour and monochrome printer drivers, providing up to 720dpi for all programs written for use with ProWesS, such as LineDesign and Paragraph. Works on all Epson inkjet printers which support binary mode compression (740, 850 and 900 models at least). 1440 dpi to follow.

QL Genealogist v3.26 £20
Genealogy For Windows £50

Store your family tree for posterity. Add individuals with details of their parents and children, watch all of those links build up into a formal family tree layout. Text files and pictures may also be linked to individuals as well as notes and events, making this the perfect way to preserve the history of your family. QL version now supports FileInfo II and QMenu as well as allowing you to link both male and female trees. Sample tree of the Royal family since 1066 included. PC version is event driven - enter the details as they appear in documents and it generates the tree from these. QL data and GEDCOM can be transferred to the PC version. Upgrade to latest PC version (v5.21) for £8 Both programs easy to use and complete with a step by step tutorial.
** QL USERS upgrade to PC version for £25 ONLY **

D-Day MKII v3.04 £10
Grey Wolf v1.8 £8
War In The East MKII v1.24 (Upgrade Only) £5

For the gaming enthusiast - D-Day is a classic table top wargame for one or two players - you control either the Allies or the Axis forces during WWII. With the ability to define your own army set ups and a choice of 4 different scenarios, this should keep you entertained for a while.
Grey Wolf is a graphical simulation of a submarine - can you sink the enemy shipping whilst avoiding their planes and destroyers??

Image D v1.03 £10

Produce graphical representations of 3D objects - view them as wireframe, hidden line and shaded. Perspective and magnification can be controlled and views can be saved to file for subsequent printing. Multiple objects can be defined and positioned relative to each other. Simple to use yet produces excellent results.

SBASIC SuperBASIC Reference Manual £40

Updates £6 each, £10 for 2 (Current Version - Rel 3)

Have you ever tried to write a program, but been lost as to the means of performing a certain action? This Reference Manual provides you with a full description and examples of how to use all of the keywords found on each of the different QLs, plus SMSQ/e, Toolkit II and many different public domain toolkits. Details of any possible problems are provided, together with descriptions of how to use the device drivers and how to ensure that your programs are compatible across the range of QL platforms.
This book is ideal for all QL users and is kept up to date with regular updates.
Orders are currently being taken for the next print run of this popular tome.
(Note: Price for the book does not include post & packing).

QL Cosmos v2.04 £5

Ever wondered what the stars in the sky looked like 100 years ago? Or, maybe you want to learn the constellations and names of what you see in the sky. This is the program for you - generates pictures of the stars and planets for any given place or time and provides details on these objects. Includes Halley's Comet, the Moon and the Solar System planets.

Q-Route v2.00 £25
Upgrade from v1.xx £5

The latest version of this popular route finding program. Find the quickest route or the shortest route between any two places, using roads. A wide range of maps is available for this program (see elsewhere in this advert). The program is easy and quick to use. You can even add your own places and roads to the maps to include local detail.

Flashback SE v2.03 (Upgrade only) £5

The ultimate database program - extremely fast and flexible, easy to use, updated to cope with the latest versions of the QL operating system and still maintained. A report module is included to allow you to format output in any way, including mail-merge. Unfortunately only available as an upgrade from the original version (original still available from Sector Software).

Return To Eden v3.08 £10
Nemesis MKII v2.03 £8
The Prawn v2.01 £8
Horrorday v3.1 £8
West v2.00 £5
The Lost Kingdom of Zkul v2.01 £5

A wealth of QL adventures - mainly text only.
Save the Galaxy from the ambitions of the evil dictator Nemesis.
Battle against werewolves and dracula look-alikes on a Hammer Horror set in the comical Horrorday.
Take the part of a prawn with a hangover, lost in a strange land in the hilarious Prawn.
Solve a bank-robbery by fighting the bad guys and collecting the loot in real-time old West.
Battle countless dwarves in the atmospheric Lost Kingdom of Zkul.
Return to Eden is a massive adventure over 3 disks with colourful graphics - control 3 characters in their quest to find the missing Prince.
All six adventures are available together for only £25.

Britain.map v1.11 £2
BIG Britain Map (needs 2MB) v2.03 £5
Various Britain Area Maps (ask for details) £2 ea
Ireland Map v1.00 £5
Belgium Map v1.01 £2
Catalonia Map v1.03 £2

The latest maps for Q-Route. Maps of various areas of Britain have been created by cutting them out of Big Britain Map - they will use less memory and can contain more detail. Areas covered: Scotland, NE England, NW England, S&W Yorkshire, Wales & Derbyshire, London area and South England.
Latest version of Q-Route is recommended.

Open Golf v5.20 £8
QuizMaster II v2.07 £5
Stone Raider II v2.00 £5
Hoverzone v1.2 £5
Deathstrike v1.5 £5
Flightdeck v1.05 £10

A range of games to keep both the young and the young at heart amused. Some are old favourites, like Golf and a pub quiz program (500+ questions). Others are fast, colourful arcade games. Flight simulator also now available. Plenty of variation and skill required - what more can you ask for?
All 6 programs only £28.

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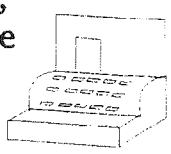


Cheques in £sterling payable to 'R.Mellor'

* Also known as Trading Accounts

More NEWS

GD2 LIBC routines

from Dave Walker

The Enhanced Graphics Driver (GD2) that gives QDOS compatible systems access to more colours than the 4/8 colours of traditional QDOS based systems is now available on the Aurora, QPC2 v2 and QXL running SMSQ/E, and may well appear in the future on other SMSQ/E based systems. To support this extended colour handling new operating system calls have been introduced. This download provides the update to C68 to add support for these new routines. Also included in the download are updates to various documents to include details of the new library routines.

Rather than provide a complete new LIBC library (at this time) the download includes the file GD2_O. This can be added to an existing LIBC_A library by a command of the form

```
EX SLB;'-cvf LIBC_A GD2_O'
```

although you may have to add paths to the filenames in the above example if the files are not in the DATA_USE directory.

NOTES

This update is only useful if you have a system that supports the GD2 driver, or are developing software for such a system.

The update is based on material provided by George Gwilt (of GWASS fame).

C68 compiler

Work has started on taking C68 forward to support the ISO 1999 C standard as described in the beta page on my website. As a result two updated versions of C68 are offered.

The first is the last release before work started on developing enhancements to make C68 compatible with the ISO 1999 C standard. Fixes a number of small bugs relative to the 4.24f release as well as some minor enhancements.

The second is the very latest source. This introduces a number of new features from the ISO 1999 C standard. These new features are not all ready for use. However if you run with the command line option of -lang=c90 these new options will be ignored. In the event of you suspecting a fault in C68 please check if you can reproduce it with this version. As it represents our current code base it is the preferred starting point for any fault investigation.

Dutch EasyPTR manual

Mr. Oudshoorn, a Dutch QLer, has made the effort to translate the EasPTR manual into Dutch. If you are interested, come to one of the Eindhoven shows and speak to him directly or send a request to QL Today which we will forward to Mr. Oudshoorn.

Quanta Website Important Announcement

Unfortunately the site hosting Quanta has ceased to function. As a result, some recent data will have been lost. When I return from my vacation I will reinstate Quanta on different, and hopefully, more reliable servers.

As usual, access will be via

www.quanta.uni.cc

Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Robin Barker (Quanta chairman)

Quanta_Support@uk2.net

Quite a lot of news, considering the summer is hot! Is there still anybody saying nothing is happening in the QL scene?

OOPS

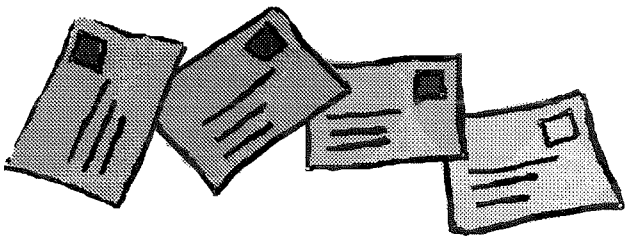
We seem to have managed to print the wrong telephone number in QL Today for Derek Stewart's Holborn View BBS.

The correct telephone number is
(+44) 01773-741335

Apologies to all.

Also, last issue contained some wrong information about Jérôme Grimberts web site and program version information. The correction can be found in the middle of this issue in an article named "Rant" from Jérôme. Sorry about that.

Letter-Box



D. Clark writes:
Do you use your computer for tasks similar to other ordinary, typical users? I have read that these typical people do:
1. Take pride in being compute-rate cf. literate
2. Publish the occasional letter.
3. Make a telephone list.
4. Scan, edit their pet photo-graphs.
5. Play games.

The QL can certainly do some of these things, and, of course, if you remove your fancy ex-pensive hardware, perhaps play more games.

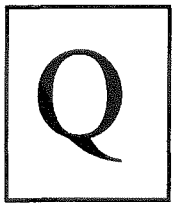
There are lots of PCs so that a CD or DVD called QLGames might take the world by storm, where the real invader would scarcely be mentioned, (the QL operating system). Such a CD-ROM requires collaboration as well as vision to manage the organisation of skills. I repeat those nasty words - that the QL operating system needs to be rarely mentioned - for why frighten ordinary people with new ideas to please ourselves. If this mythical "QLGames" is to be a success it must be very good, with interactive demos. not verbal help-files with the options of reading, printing or cancelling.
I think that I am a typi-cal user who seldom uses his computer at all and reads 'QL Today' be-cause it is partly provocative and does not mention Msdos eversomuch. I have Hewlett-Packard printers and my old Deskjet 500 has recently started to perform extremely well.

You will also have noticed the article by Peter Fox, giving us a PCL language advertisement, so I thought that I would explore QL basic and spool the results of block commands to the printer's parallel port via Miracle Systems serial to parallel connector. The Quanta library has a few such files including a "SINCLAIR" headline with files which provide the screendump command HPDUMP and few problems except that this command does not allow the left margin to be specified. (I used the parallel port because the printer dip-switch settings are less important than when the serial printer port is used.)

I did, however, wish to be clever and use some fancy characters which I cannot use on the QL and I also wished to anticipate some of Peter's next article. Will graphic files for modern printers come out on this older version printer? The answer appears to be, following Msdos to Qdos conversion, and that after editing in for example, the SPY editor, yes. You obviously cannot print a six inches wide file of 1440 dot-per-inch on a 300 dpi. printer and get it all on A4.

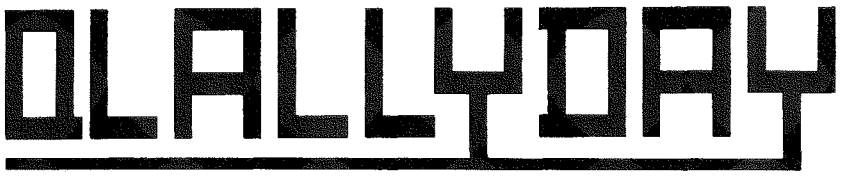
So what did happen? Firstly a long wait, but that is normal, then two paper ejections with some text, eg. "This is PCL language version 3.3U arn't we in good company? - whispers for the printers ears only etc." Then the ejection of a new page with graphics suitable for landscape orientation.

Some of the PCL commands were combined with others but I could not find all their functions in this later PCL version. So if I wished these graphics to come via the QL, then they needed to be origi-nally addressed to my older printer or I need a newer prin-ter handbook manual of com-mands. I made my fancy symbols printout satisfactorarily - a difficult game to play!.



ANGRILY -
ANXIOUSLY -
IN TUNE -

Adiratamente
Affannosamente
Accordando



George Gwilt writes:

QLIBERATOR

The remarks in Byts of Wood (Vol 5 Issue 6) that Qliberator would not compile on a Q40 prompts me to relate my findings with a Qliberated program that would not run on my Q40. I never found out why it wouldn't work, but in the course of investigating by stepping through the program I noticed an oft recurring pair of instructions. They were

```
RTS
SUBQ.L  #4,A7
```

Since the contents of the stack remained unchanged until the next occurence of the pair, I could only assume that the intention was to replace the return address on the stack so that the next RTS would return the program to the same place as before.

However, one of the first things a serious QL programmer learns is that between any two instructions his program may be taken out of circulation by the operating system's scheduler which may well make use of the program's stack before putting the program back in circulation. I know from first hand that this is so from my experience writing FPSAVE which saves and restores the Floating Point Registers when needed. The implication of this is that anything that the contents of any address less than the stack pointer must always bw considered unknown.

How then do Qliberated programs work at all? The answer is that it is almost certain that when any code attached to the scheduler returns control to the user's program it uses RTS or, as in the case of FPSAVE, RTR. Both these leave the address of the next instruction to be obeyed as the item last on the stack. Hence the instruction pair I noticed would work in the way intended.

It might be worth pondering the running of Qliberated programs on 68020+ machines. There is little to stop the linking to the scheduler of code using the advanced instructions available. FPSAVE certainly does. One of these advanced instructions is

```
RTD    #k
```

This is very similar to RTS but takes the return address as the first item on the stack before adding k to the stack pointer. After such an instruction the immediate past entry on the stack will be whatever working data the added code had put on the stack and not the the return address. Thus any attached code exiting with RTD would be a disaster for Qliberated programs.

As an aside, I am puzzled as to why the safe instruction

```
PEA    *
```

wasn't used instead of the potentially dangerous instruction

```
SUBQ.L  #4,A7
```

The PEA instruction is the same size and, on a 68020, about 20% faster.

Finally, I should report that I recompiled the Qliberated program using Turbo and it ran without trouble.

Al Boehm writes:

Dear Editors,

In the May/June 2001 issue, the article on the Quanta AGM... mentions that the emulator CD-rom can not legally be sold in North America because it contains the JS ROM since Frank Davis owns the North American copyright. I believe this is true. However, Frank has granted permission, on a case by case basis, for use of the ROM on emulators. As far as I know he has not turned anyone down nor has he charge a fee.

In another article Jim Hunkins announced the development of the QL Desktop. I also heard his talk on it at the Montreal show. I will rarely use the QDT, but I see that many QLers such as my grandchildren will love it. Why the difference?

I can touch type fast, the majority of people can not. If you can not touch type, using a mouse and pointer makes a lot of sense. The corollary is that the ability to touch type is one of the most important skills in the computer age. In any case, I see the need for and will support Jim's effort anyway I can.

As to the hardware/ emulator debate, I use both. They each have their uses. As long as the competition improves both, I am well served. Plus the controversy does make interesting reading; it gets the blood flowing, you know. Yes, there is a need to limit the fuss and, of course, I hope no one actually comes to blows.

God bless, Al Boehm

Steve Poole writes:

As for finding out if a specific program is running or not (see QL Today V6 I1 page 52), why not simply type JOBS?

If you want to process the result by a program, a bit more code than just JOBS is required - who's going to deliver it? - Editor.

BYTS OF WOOD

SAW POINTS OFFCUTS AND SNIPPETS

It seems that I have to offer a disclaimer before I commence this column. Judging by Peter Graf's comments in the last issue it seems that there is some danger that people may take this column to be something other than it actually is. When I started this column, some years ago, Jochen and I discussed what it should be about. I intended it to perform on several levels. Firstly I wanted to be able to pass on little bits of information gained by talking to programmers and users alike - all that little stuff which would be too small to be an article on its own but useful nonetheless.

I wanted to give readers who did not have access to the ql-users internet group some idea of the important issues which were raised there and I wanted to try to entertain you with some humour as well.

I also wanted to be able to comment on the state of development in the software and hardware environment and to add my views and ideas to them.

This last part is something which I hold very dear and something which I hoped would invoke some response from the readers. I had hoped for some feedback along the lines of 'yes, I have found that' or 'I would like something else to happen' or 'I disagree with this idea because...' I have sometimes expressed views which were at odds with received wisdom because I felt that a discussion of the issue was important.

Above all the ideas and views in this column are my views and opinions and nothing else. I make no claims for an in-depth knowledge of things or any great learning in any particular area but I am in the unique position of being able to talk to users, designers and programmers and, being a user and a trader as opposed to a hardware designer or programmer, does mean that I am not blinkered by either of those disciplines and can maybe draw some conclusions that they may not. I hope some of these goals have been reached but I have no intention of changing my track now.

A Little Help From My Friends

That, ever helpful, soul Duncan Neithercut emailed me the other day about the question I asked in the last column about the patch for the Q 40. It seems that the patch works fine on his system until he loads ProWesS. After that the system crashes. Since ProWesS is an integral part of my own system and it is used in every session I cannot do without it so I am unable to use the patch.

Interestingly enough I got a new version of the Q40 SMSQ/E to test when I attended the Eindhoven show in June. This one seemed, at first, to have a few problems with Qascade but further investigation it seems I can get Qascade working but not ProWess. Since this is the similar to the behaviour reported by Duncan and verified by me with the Q40 Patch I suspect that both people are working along the same lines. The system does not always crash when ProWesS is run but I cannot get ProWesS to work at all under v2.99.

Being able to run some of the QLiberated programs, and the QLib compiler itself, is a great advantage but, if ProWesS fails as a result I am even more handicapped. I have passed a copy of the latest version to PROGS and maybe they can find out what is happening here. In the meantime any Q 40 Users who want a copy should send their disks to me for updating.

And Another Thing

I also got a new version of the Gold Card SMSQ/E. This one also has problems but they are of a different kind. For a while now versions of SMSQ/E for the Gold and Super Gold Card have been unable to write to or Format DD disks. If you try then the system hangs and you have to reset. I don't know if I am the only person who has this problem but I have tried it on two different systems with nothing else loaded so I suppose that it must be fundamental to the system. Reading from DD disks is no problem and, were it not for the fact that I have to do both of these things for my customers, and the fact that much of the QL software is on DD disks I would not worry too much, The same problem does not occur on the other systems that use the same basic SMSQ/E kernel I suspect that the problem is in the interaction between the operating system and the hardware. If you have any similar problems or can throw any light on the reasons behind it then let us know.

A Case for PD COPY

Another thing mentioned in Peter Graf's article in the last issue was Mark Swift's COPY-BACK patch. As I mentioned in my reply I was very worried about using this software because I do so much work on the Q 40 and I am loath to try something out which gives warnings about its use. I have, however been using it all of this month and had no adverse effects. It definitely does speed up several processes in the Q40 and is to be recommended - but

with a caution. If you want to use these sort of programs make sure you keep impeccable back ups to make sure that your data is safe.
The thing which stands out about this is the fact that PD and shareware authors did not make their products known to the users. This magazine offered a whole page as a PD Pinboard but no authors could be bothered to use it. IF you go to the trouble of writing and perfecting code you should, at least, tell us all about it and where to get it.

Putting the BOOT In

Much is made of the speed of the boot up in QL systems but one thing has always irked me about the way that things have gone since the onset of the higher resolution drivers were launched in the wake of Aurora. I tend to start my system in mode 4 1024 x 512 resolution which, on a 15" monitor, gives a good readable text and a large area for such utilities as QSpread and LINEdesign. Changing resolution downwards to use older QL programs is never quite exact and returning to the previous resolution afterwards the screen is often not quite as it was before requiring a re-boot.
The re-booting of the whole systems to run other programs which will not work under SMSQ/E has always been a real bone of contention to me but, luckily, I have found few programs that will not run under it so I have not had to face the problem too often. On the whole the programs which will not run under SMSQ/E are either very badly written and take shortcuts which QDOS allowed but were, in fact, violations of the rules or written to use specific commands in systems such as Minerva. I would, however, like to see the whole issue of screen resolution tidied up in future releases of SMSQ/E. I realise that the way that the system draws directly to the screen makes true re-sizing difficult and that the way that modern monitors take an active part in the display rather than being passive pixel guns makes this a difficult task but there must be a way to improve this situation.

I have often wondered if it would be possible to resize separate SBASIC windows and even use different display colours in them. It would be great if we could open a SBASIC window with a parameter which would set it to be a certain size and resolution. What I have in mind is to be able to type a line like:

```
SBASIC;'1,512,256,0'
```

This would then start an SBASIC window with the following settings:

1	- QL_Colours
512	- x-resolution
256	- y-resolution
0	- full screen

The numbers are just arbitrary fantasies of my own but they are just an indication of how I would like it to be. You could then run most of the time in your favourite QL mode and just start an SBASIC job for those rare occasions when you need to play a game like QShang or run Quill etc.
I may be talking absolute rubbish here but it would be great wouldn't it?
One tip for those of you using higher resolutions and wanting to keep control of BASIC when resizing is to think about the way that the windows are drawn in your BOOT file. I use 80% of the screen for the QL windows in 1024 x 512 but I draw the BASIC channel (Window #0) at the top of the screen. This means that, no matter what resolution I choose to use I always have access to the command line. Another way to retain the command line is to leave the three main windows at the 512 x 256 sizes and draw them with an origin of 0,0. This means that, when re-sizing to smaller display values, the standard QL windows will always fill the screen.

A Minnie Diversion

I mentioned Minerva a few paragraphs ago and it brings to mind a couple of things which have popped up about that in recent weeks. There was a lot of talk about a public domain release for the last version of the Minnie ROM at the QL 2000 show but has not, so far, hit the streets. I would personally like to see some aspects of the ROM merged into SMSQ/E. Although I regard SMSQ/E as being the most advanced versions of the QL operating system available today there are a few little tricks and tweaks in the Minnie ROM which I would love to see adopted. No doubt those of you who also used Minerva before moving over to SMSQ/E have your own favourites. I suggested to Tony that, rather than make the whole ROM Public Domain he should split it into small procedures which could be either LRESPR'd into the main system or merged as modules with SMSQ/E. He could sell the whole thing on disk with a manual for a minimal sum. This would not preclude releasing the whole ROM for free but it would allow people to 'cherry pick' the better features of the code. It would also be a fairly simple thing to load.
As I have said many times the programmers, especially those whose efforts emerge in public domain, always assume that the reader can write bits of code to link, manage or act as a front end for the clockwork they provide. This is often not the case and many people are left floundering about trying to get the best from what is often a really smart bit of programming. Incidentally, if you have a MK II Minerva with the battery backed clock, and you are having trouble setting the clock from SMSQ/E go to Tony Firshman's

BBS. Derek Stewart has modified the Minerva clock setting routines to run under SMSQ/E. You will also need the new version of the Minerva resident extensions to get it to run.

And a Mag Shot

This leads me, obliquely I admit, to something Dilwyn mentioned a while ago. He wondered how many people read each copy of QL Today. I have been doing the subscription upgrades over the last few months and I have another puzzle. My software will always pop up the last invoice issued to each customer when I start a new one for him. In many cases, when I renew a subscription, the last thing people bought from Q Branch was the subscription to the magazine the previous year.

I accept that there is not a lot of new software available to buy at the moment but what is it that keeps so many of you reading the magazine? Are you trying out the programming tips? Learning assembler? writing Graphics screens? or what? Maybe there is a competition here. Finish the sentence 'I love my QL/QL Today because.....' in not more than 20 words.

I would really like to know, maybe we could tailor some new stuff especially for you all.

See Deese

It always amazes me how I can have a conversation with someone one day and find someone else has already done some work on the very project we are discussing. On the way to Eindhoven Tony Firshman and I were discussing Qubide and how there were no boards left to make new ones. Tony had already been in contact with Nasta about Qubide and had considered putting a Qubide on a future MPlane since it would take very few chips to do it these days. In the course of that discussion we also said that it would be good if it could read CD ROM drives too since the ATAPI driver already existed. We discussed who we could approach to get this done and what format the CDs would be in etc.

Lo and behold the Internet News Group springs into life with Thierry Godefroy's announcement that he had been working on just such a thing for the Q 40/Q 60! This piece of news sparked a very lively debate and, of course, led us into the long file names debate. Thierry suggested that he had already thought of this and had some ideas of how to get over the hurdle without re-writing the device drivers so that could be a good thing in itself but when I suggested that the CD drives should be able to read PC format CDs I got an answer which said that we should not have to use a PC format which was large and bloated but we should 'set our own standards'.

That is an admirable sentiment if those standards allow us to read other disk format but absolute rubbish if not. Why drive ourselves further into isolation? The more we can exchange information between the various forms of QL and the other computer systems the more people will stick with their QLs at home. Although much of the stuff on PC disks would be useless there is a lot of good graphic clipart which might get someone to write a good, high-colour, graphics application and what about the QXL.WIN files from QXL/QPC owners. I don't know how easy it would be to get a CD Writer working with Thierry's software but just being able to dump my QXL.WIN file onto a CD and take it to work meant I could access my address books etc. on that computer. I always backup the Q 40 drive to my Desktop PC via floppies and then write that to a CD. A CD writer for the Q 40 would be very welcome. Of course there would have to be a simple way to read QXL.WIN files on the Q 40. I have never tried qxltools but I will give it a look.

Honourable Mention of the Year.

Having written the above I have just read the announcement in the ql-users group that the beta version of the CD-ROM driver is now available on Thierry's website. I have just downloaded the drivers from his site and installed them onto the Q 40. I have only had a brief look at what is available but there does seem to be a lot of promise here.

For a start it seems that the new drivers will read QXL.WIN files burnt onto CD ROM disks. It also says that it works on the Aurora with Qubide. There is a separate driver for the Qubide and I will be trying this out too over the next few weeks.

Either of these two things would be a great boon for the QL but both together in one package is a positive explosion. If this project advances to full fruition it will go a long way to improving the QL position and should allow users of more than one system at least a one way transfer. A version of this software that allowed CD burning would be another great advance and the documentation that goes with the package hints that CD writing should also be possible.

This is going to big a big project and I suspect that it is one which may need a lot of co-operation from other parties. Let us hope that this time we call all pull together and support this vital new initiative.

Definitely the Honourable Mention of the Year

The QL Show Agenda

QL Meeting - (NL) Eindhoven

Saturday, 1st of September, 10:00 to 16:00

Pleincollege St. Joris, Roostenlaan 296

Unfortunately, JMS will not be able to attend this time, but will be present again at the November meeting. The English dealers prefer to come to the November show too.

Quanta workshop - (GB) Byfleet

Sunday, 23rd of September

Same venue as every year:

The Byfleet Village Hall.

QL Meeting - (D) Berchtesgaden

Sat./Sun., 6th/7th of October

We try to turn this into "QL 2001" - why not come along and make sure that it will be "the event" of the year? More details can be found in Issue 1/Volume 6 of QL Today (both German and English) or directly from the organiser Friedemann Oertel:

F.Oertel.BGD@t-online.de or **Phone +49-8652-94871-2**

QL Show - (F) Paris

Saturday, 13th of October, 10:00 to 16:00

Université Paris, 82 Rue de la Liberté, Saint Denis

Room number B231

Métro - Ligne 13, terminus Saint-Denis - Université.

Bus - lignes 253, 254, 255, 260, 268, 356, 361

http://www.univ-paris8.fr/up8/moyens_d_acces.shtml